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EDITED BY V. T. HARLOW, M.A., AND J. A. WILLIAMSON, D.LIT.

THE GREAT TREK

THE PIONEER HISTORIES

Edited by V. T. Harlow, D.Litt., & J. A. Williamson, D.Lit.

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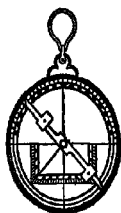
THE GREAT TREK

BY

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EDITORS' PREFACE TO THE SERIES

THE Pioneer Histories are intended to provide broad surveys of the great migrations of European peoples—for purposes of trade, conquest and settlement—into the non-European continents. They aim at describing a racial expansion which has created the complex world of to-day, so nationalistic in its instincts, so internationalised in its relationships.

International affairs now claim the attention of every intelligent citizen, and problems of world-wide extent affect the security and livelihood of us all. He who would grasp their meaning and form sound judgements must look into the past for the foundations of the present, and, abandoning a local for a universal perspective, must take for his study the history of a world invaded by European ideas. It was less so in the days before the Great War. Then the emphasis was upon Europe itself: upon such questions as that of France's eastern frontier inherited from Richelieu and Louis XIV, the militarism of Germany derived from Frederick the Great, and the Balkan entanglement which originated with the medieval migrations of Slavonic peoples and with the Turkish conquests of the fourteenth century. Now the prospect is wider, for these ancient domestic difficulties in modern form cannot properly be estimated except by correlation with the problems of a Europeanised outer world.

The Orient is in ferment and its difficulties compel the attention of the United Nations because long ago the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch and the English, rounded the Cape and came to India. For the same reason, Africa is no longer an unknown continent but a vast area in which civilised enterprise demands direction and control. Knowledge of the process by which North America was discovered and gradually filled with Europeans is the necessary basis for an understanding of the modern reactions upon each other of the new continent and the old. In South America the same process is to be seen at work, though incomplete while Nature is yet unsubdued. Similarly, it may be appreciated how the search for an unknown but credited continent lying about the South Pole has helped to shift the centre of gravity to the Pacific, and has created a white Australasia. The present series will show how the permanent factors in these great regions first presented themselves to European minds and how achievements were then effected which have governed all subsequent relationships.

But if the subject has this interest for students of affairs, it has also its appeal to those who dwell most on individual character, courage and ingenuity. Movements are made by men, and in these stories of European expansion are to be met men worth knowing, whose deeds carry inspiration and sometimes warning for this generation as for all others.

Each volume takes for its subject the history of an important movement and, while related to others in the series, is thus complete in itself. The authors whose co-operation we have been fortunate to secure have all had experience of research in the original evidence pertaining to their subjects, and in their contributions

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to this series they give the results of that research in narratives which should appeal to the general reader. Each book is designed to embody the most recent information available, and some will be found to deal with subjects of which no full treatment has hitherto been accessible in English.

V. T. HARLOW

J. A. WILLIAMSON

PREFACE

THE Great Trek is the central event in South African history. The folk who went out of the Cape Colony a hundred years ago went because their ideas and mode of life were threatened by changing circumstances. They gained a fifty years' respite in the interior. Thereafter their mode of life was steadily broken down by new and incompatible forces, but their ideas, confirmed and invigorated during those fifty years of grace, have permeated the Union of South Africa and extended their influence as far north as Kenya.

The Trekkers were a people with little political experience but with a flair for politics. They undertook to found a State and society in the wilderness, and they did it. Some of their ideas were prophetic. Generals Smuts and Hertzog, both Afrikanders, have been among the most prominent exponents of the post-war Dominion status, but in all essentials their ideas on that score were anticipated in 1840 by the Boers of republican Natal.

Quite apart from its bearing on present-day Africa or on the development of a republican theory and practice markedly different from that of the British parliamentary system, the story of the Great Trek deserves to be told for its own sake. It was a great adventure. I have tried to tell it as the single thing it was, taking the laagers and Trekker villages as my standing ground and relying as far as possible on Boer sources.

In keeping with the plan of the *Pioneer Histories* I have given references in footnotes to the most easily accessible published sources. Further authorities can be found in the bibliography of the *Cambridge History of*

PREFACE

the British Empire, VIII, and of my own *History of South Africa*.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging once more my debt to the late Dr. J. G. Gubbins of Malmani, Transvaal, and to Messrs. D. J. J. de Villiers of Cape Town and J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton of Pretoria University, who sent me the originals or copies of many documents relating for the most part to the early Transvaal, and of thanking Professor Charles Manning of the London School of Economics for leave to use as illustrations drawings of a trek waggon and the defence of a laager made in 1846 by his grandfather, Charles Davidson Bell, at that time Assistant Surveyor-General of the Cape Colony. The other illustrations are from the unrivalled collection of South African historical photographs in the possession of Mr. Arthur Elliott of Cape Town.

For the rest, if I have made the Trekkers and Governors and missionaries and chieftains and scallywags come to life again in this centenary year of the Great Trek, I shall have done what I set out to do.

E. A. W.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
July 1938

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

I have revised the text and maps carefully, and have made a few additions and necessary cuts. I have nothing further to say by way of Preface beyond repeating my thanks to all who have helped me.

E. A. W.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
February 1947

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THE GREAT TREK

CHAPTER I

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

And it came to pass the self-same day that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

EXODUS XII, 51

(THE Great Trek was a journey. It was a journey inspired by a very definite spirit and intention, and it had lasting and widespread results.) That is why it is worth writing about.

There are many journeys in South Africa, often very long ones, that are something less than treks even though they be made in traditional style with tilted waggons and spans of oxen. A man goes off thus, trading, hunting, prospecting, 'for to admire and for to see', and turns up again six months or even a year later. But he has not been really trekking. He has been making a *tog*, a mere trip. Or he sets out on a two or three days' journey for business or pleasure. That is just 'a little ride'. Or he loads up his family and some of the household stuff and makes a round of calls on friends and relations, a day or two at each place and so home. That is a *kuier*, a visit, and nothing more.

A trek is something more final and purposeful than any of these other peregrinations of a loosely rooted and clannish folk. To trek means to migrate, to clear out definitely. 'O, vat jou goed en trek, Pereira', the old song runs, 'Hump your pack and go', with the unspoken

injunction, 'Don't come back'. That is the point. The hunter, the cattle barterer, the prospector, the systematic visitor, leaves home intending to return this year, next year, some time, but the trekker leaves one home to go to another. Maybe he has no home but his waggon to go to, like those trekboers who to this day wander endlessly living by their guns and a little trafficking and such other means as the Lord may provide; but usually, like the men and women who made the Great Trek, he leaves home to seek a new home elsewhere.

The Great Trek, then, was an exodus. In the late thirties and early forties of the nineteenth century numbers of Afrikaner sheep- and cattle-farmers left the frontier districts of the Cape Colony and founded Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. —

It is easy to fix the beginning of the movement. That was in the last quarter of 1835 when Louis Trigardt, recognised universally as the first of the Voortrekkers, crossed the Orange. It is not so easy to fix its end, for it did not end so much as peter out and lose itself in other movements to which it had itself given rise.

If, however, the story of the Great Trek be regarded primarily as the story of a journey and neither as the history of the early Boer republics nor a problem that had to be faced by British statesmen, the proper stopping place would seem to be the end of the third quarter of 1848.

And for the following reasons. There were really two Treks. The first Trek was a more or less organised exodus from the Cape Colony inspired partly by economic and partly by sentimental motives. This began at the close of 1835, waxed steadily till 1840 and then died away. Towards the close of 1843 the Republic of Natal submitted finally to the Crown, and the British

began, very, tentatively, to follow the Trekkers across the Orange river. Those events mark the end of the first Trek and the beginning of the second. Emigration from the Colony did not cease; indeed, during the 'forties, there was a flow from the more settled parts outwards; but most of the folk who now crossed the Orange were economic or even prudential trekkers who left the Colony to better themselves or to better the Colony. The real Second Trek was the withdrawal to the Transvaal of the Natal republicans and the more determined of the Trekkers from what is now the Orange Free State, and the migration of southern Transvaalers still farther to the north. All these things had been done by September 1848. Natal had been practically emptied of its Boer inhabitants, the uttermost Transvaal had been staked out by the settlement of the Zoutpansberg, and the British, by their annexation of the lands between the Orange and the Vaal, had possessed themselves of the southern reaches of the Trekkers' Road and had sent yet another troop of irreconcilables northward, always northward, into the Transvaal, the last refuge of the Trekkers. The Great Trek ended thus thirteen years after the first little trek parties had set off towards the Orange River drifts, and, ending, set the stage for all that was to follow in South Africa from that day to this.

There is a tendency, natural at all events in South Africa, where loves and hates and hopes and fears and disappointments are closely interwoven with men's memories of these things, to regard the Great Trek as something unique and something greater in point of numbers than it actually was.

The Great Trek was not unique, nor was it, as far as numbers go, great. Trekking in waggons is one of the

oldest and most widespread of human activities. Drifting trekker tribes, part agriculturalists but far more herdsmen, have filled the vague background of civilised history for century upon century. At the time of the Great Trek Europeans were moving thus, outward and onward, in North America and Australasia as well as in southern Africa. They went, the most adventurous and the least adaptable, the two strains that have always made up the mass of pioneering society, for the same good and sufficient reasons that have sent the donkey frisking and jibbing and tittupping down the ages: the stick behind and the carrot before, hard times and great expectations.

The Great Trek was thus merely an advance upon one sector of the European front, and a small sector at that. It is hard to estimate the numbers of the folk who left the Cape Colony. Perhaps it was 14,000 during the first decade. Contrast that with the mass migrations that were then taking place in North America. Not many of the trek parties in South Africa numbered 100 waggons, but 100 prairie schooners was a common sight on the Oregon trail. Consider Brigham Young and his Mormons, 12,000 of them, setting out from Illinois to found a new society in the wilderness. What though less than half made the full journey to Salt Lake City within the first two years, that was more by one-fifth than trekked from the Cape Colony during the same period of time.

Nor were obstacles in South Africa so great as in North America. The American trekkers must traverse grassy plains swept from end to end by Red Indians, few perhaps, but well mounted, armed with guns, implacable. Beyond the plains was the desert, and beyond the desert the double range of the Rockies. In numbers

alone were they at a marked advantage as compared with the South African emigrants.

The Boers indeed had to face hardships in plenty, and, if they proposed to go into Natal or the plains behind Delagoa Bay, they must clamber down the steep escarpment of the Drakensberg. But almost as soon as they had crossed the Orange river they passed into country better than that which they were leaving, and found that most of the open plains above the Drakensberg and in more diversified Natal below had been recently cleared of inhabitants by intertribal wars.

Again, most of the tribes were marked by the complacency that characterises the Bantu of southern Africa. The only real danger, grave enough in all conscience but localised, came from the Matabele beyond the Vaal river in the north or from the kindred Zulus beyond Natal and the Tugela river in the south-east. In the early crucial days of the Trek neither of these two militarised monarchies nor most of the less dangerous tribes around them had ever ridden a horse or effectively handled a gun. The mixed-breed Griquas had both, but they were few and more or less under missionary control. The great fighting Bantu tribes had no missile weapons other than the assegai; they did not even use the bow and arrow. Had they done so the story of the Great Trek must have been very different. Once they had been broken, the plains at least were safe for European occupation.

American distances were greater than South African. After leaving the last outposts of civilisation in Missouri, the Mormons must face a good 1000 miles to Salt Lake, and the Oregon travellers 1600 before they could look down on the Pacific. But in South Africa, from the Trekkers' jumping-off ground at Colesberg just south of the Orange river, it was only about 500

miles to Port Natal (Durban) as waggons must go skirting the Basuto highlands. It was little more than 300 miles to Potchefstroom, their first settlement beyond Vaal river, while to the Zoutpansberg in the north-eastern Transvaal, beyond which the fever-soaked valley of the Limpopo set a limit to the dispersion, it was perhaps as far again.

Finally, whereas Mormons and backwoodsmen made their journey with all speed, the Trekkers made theirs by easy stages. It was the difference between Yankee 'Get on or go under' and the Afrikaner 'To-morrow is also a day'. The Trekkers were used to the gentle drift of pastoral life, content to go

For ever over never-ending grass
And have no home except the black felt tent
And the great plain and the great sky and silence.

Except that for the black tent they had the white tilted waggon.

✓ Nevertheless the Great Trek earned its title. Numbers engaged and mileage covered are not the only constituents of greatness. The Great Trek was great not so much in comparison with the little treks that had gone on from time immemorial in the Cape Colony, nor even by reason of the high proportion, say, one in fifty, the numbers of the Trekkers bore to the total white population. It was great because it was, it still is, the central event in the history of European man in southern Africa. The results that have flowed from it can be traced far north to the equator and beyond.

The Great Trek was the third and by far the most rapid stage in the European expansion that has radiated from the original settlement at Cape Town. That settlement had been made in the middle of the seventeenth

century. The first stage of the expansion had been slow. At the end of sixty years the farthest settled Europeans still dwelt within 100 miles of the Castle. The second stage, four generations this time from 1706 till 1835, had carried the most distant cattlemen some 300 miles to the northward and half as much again east and north-eastward. Then came the Trek, and in a dozen short years the area staked out for European occupation was more than doubled.

The immediate political and social results of that rapid expansion were of first-class importance. Almost from the first the pastoral backveld behind the settled agricultural area around Cape Town had posed the real problem of government to the authorities at the Castle and at home, whether Home was the Low Countries or England. At the time of the Trek that backveld covered four-fifths of the Colony; the Trek doubled its extent and scattered all its intractable problems over the huge and inaccessible spaces of the interior. And whereas there had hitherto been one government to wrestle with those problems, there were soon several inspired with radically different ideas. Looking out over a balkanised South Africa in the middle 'fifties, a High Commissioner could lament that the area of disturbance had been increased fully as much as the area of settlement.

There was more in it than that. By trekking so fast and so far the Trekkers influenced themselves and others profoundly. They pushed in among the Bantu tribes, the first white men to do so in any numbers, and British troops and officials pushed in after them. Republican and colonial governments alike were thus committed to the hitherto unattempted task of ruling Bantu tribesmen alongside of Europeans and mixed-breed

Coloured folk. The South African native problem began to assume its familiar form. Again, the Trekkers had removed themselves further than ever out of reach of the established ways of the south-western farm-lands and of the bracing winds from the outer world that blew around the Cape Peninsula. Therein lay the greatest and most lasting result of the Great Trek.

The Trekkers were the most highly specialised members of the specialised European society that had been taking shape for nearly 200 years in the isolation of southern Africa. Almost to a man they were men whose trade had been about cattle from their youth up, both they and their fathers. Or if not about cattle, then about sheep. For six generations past they and their kind had led the cramped life that men must lead in the great open spaces, either dominating despised slaves and Hottentot serfs, or in conflict and danger of conflict with Bushmen and Bantu tribesmen. Inevitably they had acquired a very definite outlook upon everything in Heaven and upon earth. There came a time when the forces of the outer world penetrated their fastnesses. So they trekked, they cleared out up-country. There, in deeper remoteness than ever, combined this time with political independence, they enjoyed another long generation of comparative immunity from non-African influences.

Modern Afrikaner publicists note with greater or less degrees of approbation that the Trekkers were the authentic product of South African conditions, the men who first and most consistently displayed the unalloyed Afrikaner *kultuur*, the Simon Pure of Afrikanerdom. It would be strange if it were not so. Frontier forces that in North America produced the hundred per cent. American who owed less than others to external in-

fluences, and therefore possessed less of the common heritage of the West, produced also the hundred per cent. Afrikaner in South Africa.¹

The Trekkers took with them an abundance of grievances, real and less real. They took also a loose group consciousness born of experiences not shared by others who had lived in more kindly and less isolated parts of the Cape Colony. They had thus the two essentials requisite to the making of a nation: a fellow-feeling for one another in the mass reinforced by dislike, suspicion, contempt or fear of all who were not of their company. And a nation they became.

From the first the Trekkers claimed to be South African in a special sense. The term 'South African' had been coming into use in the old settled western Colony before they moved off; the first permanent place of higher education in Cape Town, founded in 1829, had been named the South African College, the Dutch newspaper of the day at the capital was called *De Zuid Afrikaan*. They took up the idea and called themselves the 'emigrant South Africans'. Presently, on achieving formal independence, the Transvaalers, the most determined of the Trekkers, called their republic the South African Republic. In these matters there is much virtue in a name. The national idea took root and grew up round the Trekker republics, especially round that which lay beyond the Vaal.

In the 'sixties Colonial Afrikaners in the agricultural south-west looked down their noses at these turbulent Free Staters and Transvaalers. But other Afrikaners, especially those in the sparsely peopled northern and north-eastern reaches of the Colony from which the

¹ F. J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, p. 3; E. A. Walker, *The Frontier Tradition in South Africa*.

Trekkers themselves had gone, looked upon them with sympathy and understanding. They were bone of the Trekkers' bone, and, for all their British citizenship, their ideas were theirs. They were even ready to trek to the Republics to escape colonial drought and taxation.

As the nineteenth century wore on Colonial Afrikaner sympathy became more general, and sympathy paved the way for co-operation. The annexation by Great Britain of Basutoland and the Griqualand West diamond-fields in the Free State's despite, and the grant of responsible government to the Cape Colony, stirred the Cape Afrikanders into activity. A cultural society to foster the Afrikaans tongue came into being in the heart of the old western Colony. And then England, or rather Natal, annexed the Transvaal. That awakened 'a national glow of sympathy' in the Colony and in the Free State,¹ and, sure-enough, the cultural Afrikaner society became the political Afrikaner Bond pledged to further all things Afrikaner on a subcontinental scale.

In spite of the successful Transvaal war of 1880-81 which gave the Transvaalers a good conceit of themselves and warmed the hearts of their kinsmen everywhere, the Bond never came to much in the two Republics, and in the Colony it soon dropped its anti-British enthusiasms under the prudent guidance of Jan Hofmeyr. Yet in the early 'eighties even Hofmeyr was inclined to support the Transvaal in the pursuit of its manifest destiny, the control of Bechuanaland and the road to Central Africa.

The Transvaal's exclusive railway and customs policies and its open suspicion of everything that came from the Colonial south alienated the Bond which Hofmeyr

¹ J. H. Hofmeyr, *Life of Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr*, p. 164.

swung over to the side of Rhodes, the Home Ruler and champion of the Cape Colony. Late nineteenth-century civilisation in its crudest form invaded the Rand gold-fields in the heart of the Transvaal, the Boer sanctuary, and in the persons of Rhodes's Pioneers got in behind the republicans and cut them off from the grazing-lands of Mafabele-Mashonaland. . . .

The Jameson Raid caused a wild revulsion of feeling. That fatal enterprise was denounced in the Colony as an attack on Afrikaner nationality everywhere.

The South African war that followed so hard upon the Raid was the sequel to the Great Trek. Pressed upon once more by the forces of the outer world and with their retreat cut off, the sons and grandsons of the Trekkers stood and fought.

The republicans lost the war, but they won the peace. Afrikaners all over southern Africa learned to look to Pretoria as to their Mecca. A second Afrikaans campaign was set on foot, the Afrikaners rallied in the political field, and within six years of the end of the war Afrikaners were in control of the Cape Colony, the Free State and the Transvaal. The union of those three provinces with each other and with Natal was carried under predominantly Afrikaner auspices. Since the electoral laws of the Union favour the ex-republics as against the Cape Colony, and rural Afrikaner districts everywhere as against the more or less British towns, the Union to-day is dominated politically by the Trekker North.

Thus has come to pass in great measure the gloomy prophecy of a Cape Colonist in the middle 'fifties that the then newly liberated republics would one day annex the coast colonies.

The glamour of romance has gathered round the

Great Trek. South African historians, poets and novelists have been stirred by the great adventure, and latterly politicians have held up the ideas, the aims and the methods of the Trekkers as guides to South Africans in their present perplexities. Few of them have had much that is good to say of missionaries and imperial officials, necessarily the chief critics of frontiersmen all the world over.

For those reasons alone, even if the story of the Great Trek were not a fine one, it would be well worth while to enquire what manner of folk the Trekkers really were, why they trekked, and what they did on trek. The chapters that follow are an attempt to answer those three questions.

There is plenty of material for an answer. Fifty years before the Trek, the British and French, scrambling for the trade of the East, had revealed to the world the importance of the Cape Peninsula. Thereafter the half-way house to India changed hands repeatedly. The British took it from the dying Dutch East India Company, gave it back to the Batavian Republic, took it again, and this time kept it. And all the while France crouched for a spring.

Each actual or potential home government wanted to know all about this greatly desired naval base and the unwieldy colony that was tacked on to it. For two generations, while the fathers and the sons who were destined to go out on the Great Trek were growing up, it rained official reports and correspondence of all kinds in High Dutch, French and English. That was not all. Missionaries of various nationalities and denominations reported on the prospects of this new field that was, if not exactly white, at all events black and brown to the harvest. There were also scientists, hunters, traders,

occasionally globe-trotters, who wrote assiduously for a public that liked solid books about out-of-the-way countries and strange peoples.

Nor were the Cape Colonists themselves silent. A free press had been established in the Colony some years before the Trek, and the papers, Dutch and English, had much to say about the movement and what led up to it.¹ Two of the Trekkers kept diaries, most of which have come down to us; Louis Trigardt, the first Voortrekker, was one, and Erasmus Smit, the nearest approach to a clergyman the Trekkers had with them for several years, was the other.² Trekkers, men and women, wrote or related their memories sooner or later after the event, too often later than sooner.³ Lastly, the minutes of the Natal republican legislature and fragments of the early Transvaal archives have survived.⁴ These papers shew better than any other documents what were the Trekkers' ideas on the proper ordering of society.

¹ E.g. *S.A. Commercial Advertiser*, *Zuid Afrikaan*, *Grahamstown Journal*.

² *Dagboek van Louis Trigardt*, and the surviving part of the *Dagboek van Erasmus Smit* (*Voortrekkermense*, ii), (ed. G. S. Preller).

³ J. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, i, ii; J. C. Chase, *The Natal Papers*, i, ii; *Voortrekkermense*, i-iv (ed. G. S. Preller).

⁴ *Voortrekker Wetgewing: notule van die Natalse Volksraad, 1839-45* (ed. G. S. Preller); *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke, 1829-49* (ed. H. S. Pretorius and D. W. Kruger).

CHAPTER II

THE CAPE FRONTIERSMEN

The Vee-Boers (cattle farmers) in general have many good and pleasing qualities and may fairly charge their defects to their past history and present circumstances.

GEORGE THOMPSON: TRAVELS AND ADVENTURES, II, 116

Altogether a singular people, and likely to remain unchanged so long as they exist at all. JOHN HOWISON: EUROPEAN COLONIES, I, 352

THE Trekkers were frontiersmen drawn from a colony that was nearly all frontier. One of their major reasons for trekking was lack of security, security of a highly artificial kind which the Government could not give by reason of its scanty resources, the paucity of the mixed population it had to rule, and the relatively immense area over which that population was scattered.

The Colony of the Cape of Good Hope in 1834 was about three-fifths the size of France, some 120,000 square miles, with a population of perhaps 150,000 souls. Of these roughly 65,000 were Europeans, 39,000 were slaves and the rest free persons of colour, that is, Bushmen, Hottentots and mixed Coloured folk. A few Bantu were already included within the Colony at the far eastern end, but, in keeping with the traditional policy of racial segregation, they were still regarded as interlopers.

At Cape Town a Governor, member of the Horse Guards dynasty and responsible to the Secretary of

State for War and the Colonies three months' sail away in Downing Street, presided anxiously over a Crown Colony establishment that had recently been liberalised to include a Legislative Council of officials and unofficial nominees with strictly limited powers, and a professional and independent Supreme Court. The clergy of various denominations were more or less under governmental control, though that control was relaxing visibly, especially over the Dutch Reformed Church, the church of the overwhelming majority of the colonists.

Each district of the Colony, huge and loosely articulated, was furnished with a resident magistrate and a civil commissioner, or sometimes in the cause of economy with one official who discharged both duties. Each district again was subdivided into wards in which field cornets, the indispensable local officials, performed minor military and civil duties usually without payment other than in prestige and a few privileges.

A naval squadron was based on Simonstown in the Cape Peninsula. A considerable garrison of British regulars occupied the Castle and the batteries which lined the shores of Table Bay. Detachments of troops, regulars again and coloured Cape Mounted Riflemen, were disposed along the comparatively short eastern or Kaffir frontier, roughly the line of the Fish river, with their headquarters at Grahamstown. But the long indefinite north-eastern and northern frontiers were bare of troops and but poorly supplied with magistrates.

Politically the Cape Colony was one unit, a British Crown Colony. Geographically, socially and in every other way it was divided into two distinct parts: on the one hand, the 'mediterranean' coast-belt in the south-western corner in which lay Cape Town and its Peninsula

and the agricultural districts immediately adjacent thereto, and, on the other, the huge inhospitable plains behind the mountains.

This second part of the Colony, always a thing by itself, was the home of the Trekkers. But since the mediterranean part was the base from which their ancestors had gone out and was still the only considerable civilised area that they themselves had ever known by anything more than hearsay, something must be said about it here.

The Cape Peninsula and the farm-belt were pleasant lands blessed with a good winter rainfall from May to November and with fresh sea breezes that carried 100 miles inland. Homer's Greeks would have felt at their ease therein, for nearly everywhere the mountains looked on the lowlands and the lowlands looked on the sea. Scrub and tufty grass covered the plains and the lower slopes of the hills. In sheltered valleys the scrub rose higher even to the fragile dignity of the silver trees of the Peninsula; oaks and poplars, firs and pines flourished in the sandy soil. Enough grey and blue-green in the landscape, except where the oaks and poplars were massed, to make dull days duller than in England where the brown and yellow greens refuse to be overawed by the lowering heavens; nevertheless, a thoroughly European countryside in a sense that the interior was not.

To get the measure of it, go down over the St. Gott-hard into the Italian cantons of Switzerland. There are the same broad shallow streams of clear brown water rushing over rounded boulders; vines and figs and fruit trees blossoming, pumpkins and corn and maize; white-washed and yellow-washed houses, thatched roofs, all of it pleasantly untidy but comfortable and reassuring,

a country that has been lived in, where things have happened and may happen again.

Cape Town, 'the Town', for there was but this one that deserved the name in all the Colony, contained close on 20,000 inhabitants, of whom rather more than one-half were Europeans. The streets were of hard red earth, dusty and abominable when the summer south-easters blew, but beautified by avenues of oaks and runnels of clear water. Travellers noted with surprise and pleasure the handsome white public buildings, nearly all of them legacies of the last days of the Company's magnificence, and the fine roomy houses, flat-roofed, flat-fronted, adorned with pilasters and pediments, and with stoeps built of small Batavian bricks and floored with large red tiles or slabs of slate. Some of these houses were symbolical of their country in that they were so big that their occupants had to leave rooms unfurnished and furnish the rest scantily, at all events scantily to English eyes accustomed to apartments crowded with the products of the Industrial Revolution. But for all that, much of the furniture was beautiful: heavy teak and yellow-wood and stinkwood armoires silver-hinged and tables darkly polished, great chests bound with gleaming brass, fine copper and glass from Europe and china from the East. To-day these things are collectors' pieces.

Outside the town the homesteads were scattered far apart over the rest of the Peninsula and the farm-belt, each in the shade of its oaks or camphor trees. Many had spacious pillared stoeps, tiny-paned windows and the lovely curving gables of the late eighteenth century, and most had something of the gracious furnishings of the town houses.

Here and there were villages: Stellenbosch, the Paarl,

Tulbagh, Worcester and, farthest away of all, Swellendam, none of them with more than 3000 inhabitants. Except the Paarl, which was one interminable oak-shaded street, all were laid out on the same general plan. The church held pride of place in its square in the centre, the substantial thatched and whitewashed houses lay demurely behind their oaks and water furrows. Three or four broad straight streets one way, three or four more cutting across them at right angles, and each street ending abruptly in a glimpse of red-brown earth, greenish veld, a blue mountain and a white cloud.

Greek the setting of Cape Town and the dorps and the farms may have been, but in the eighteen-thirties there was little of Athens nor yet of Sparta about their friendly and leisurely people. Thebes perhaps, but even so Thebes without her Pindar.

Cape Town was a cosmopolitan place as it had been from the beginning. There was plenty of scope for jealousy in a little town dominated by officials and their ladies, a town in which nearly everyone else from highest to lowest was a merchant, shopkeeper or boarding-house proprietor, a slave-owning town where, as in all such places, even the humblest families reckoned to have a slave or two and to make easy money.

To complicate matters still further the Peninsula was full of British, and the relations between British and Afrikaners were not yet cordial. Civil servants of the two nationalities might meet in the coffee-house; they and their neighbours and even farmers from far afield might bet against one another at race meetings; enthusiasts from either camp might combine to fight for a free press, to protest against new slave laws, or to demand an elected legislature; their young folk might intermarry. But the two peoples still lived in separate

camps even though English, now the official tongue, was spoken freely by Afrikanders in the town and also by many on the farms. In so far as Afrikanders could not speak English, nor Englishmen High Dutch or Cape Dutch, there was a gulf fixed; but the real obstacle to intimacy was a matter of feeling. The touchy Afrikanders liked the congenial Scots and blarneying Irishmen well enough, but they thought the shy English stiff and silently censorious, while the English, especially those of the still Tory official class, thought them queer.

Fortunately the English, as their manner is, rarely troubled to quarrel and the Afrikanders were a complacent folk unless they had their drink taken, which was rarely. But they could be roused, and then they would reveal depths of emotion that no stranger would suspect from their usually placid demeanour. Especially could they be roused by criticism of Cape ways.

Taking them all round, the Peninsular Afrikanders, tall, stoutly built and fresh-complexioned, were a cheerful folk, hospitable, and troubled little by the Englishman's snobbery and desire for privacy. They might travel seldom and move house still less often, but they visited one another continually of an evening and were ready in turn to receive visitors at any hour of the day or night. The talk would be of personal matters, the concerns of their neighbours, the affairs of the Colony, and possibly the state of Europe in so far as that affected the Cape. When these things and daylight failed, they would fall back on candles and cards.

Few of them read, though there was a good public library in Cape Town even in those days, and still fewer had any pretensions to learning if only for lack of opportunity. But, like all their fellow-Afrikanders,

they had a great reverence for book-learning and held clergymen, even missionaries, in high esteem not only as men of God but as men of erudition.

As for the rising generation, the young Peninsular ladies, lively, self-possessed and often intelligent, found their energies fully occupied with the reading of novels, gossiping with members of the opposite sex, and dancing. For the rest they could reckon on marrying early and, when they had done so, busying themselves about the house and, be it confessed, growing plump.

Many of the Peninsular damsels found favour in the sight of British officers and other new-comers. Not so their brothers. The young men of the Cape too often struck overseas observers as heavy in the hand. But what was there to rouse them? There never had been enough official posts to go round, and now British competition had reduced the number available. There was little to tempt them to sea, there were few farms to be had close at hand and those expensive, while to go up-country meant living the life of a stock farmer, a Boer. None but the very poorest and most hard-driven could dream of manual labour, for that was work for Coloured folk or slaves. What else could most of them do but fall back on petty traffic either on their own account or on commission for more established men?

Luckily for these young fellows and their fathers, there was little in the way of luxury or organised amusements for them to spend money on, necessities were cheap, and their mothers prided themselves on being good managers. There was usually enough to go round even after the demands of charity had been met, a charity governed by the first rule of South African life that no white man at least must be allowed to go under utterly.

The folk on the farms and in the dorps were much the same as those in the Peninsula, often indeed their relatives by blood or marriage, but less touched by outer influences, even less versed in book-learning, more easygoing in a land where it was always afternoon, and more limited in their ideas and interests. Hospitable to a fault, they delighted in endless slow talk over their pipes and coffee, talk that as a rule went little beyond the affairs of the farming districts. Peninsular folk might take stock of distant Europe and India and look for advancement to Government and for prosperity to the ships, but they looked to their vineyards and cornfields and cattle pastures and nowhere else. Why should they go to Cape Town unless they had to? The thirty-mile journey across the sandy Flats was arduous and the capital was a flighty place, or so the older folk believed, a place best shunned by God-fearing burghers and their womenkind. As for the plains and the pastoralists beyond the mountains, what had they to do with them? Is not every shepherd an abomination to the Egyptians?

Self-containedness was the mark of rural life. A Western Province farm was still a patriarchy of anything up to 100 souls, bond and free, and also much cattle. It supplied most of its own wants, relied on its slaves for handicrafts, and looked to the outer world only for a few luxuries and raw materials.

So it was also in the villages. The leaders of society there were the predikant,¹ the master of the school that always went with the church, the magistrate if there was one, and perhaps also the master of one of the new Government schools. The rank and file plied their trades, did a little farming or market gardening as a side-line,

¹ A minister of the Dutch Reformed Church.

and lived, generally, by taking in each other's washing. Men must live so where production outstrips consuming capacity. Then and later the problem for South Africa was the weakness of the home market.

Such was the mediterranean area and such its people in the eighteen-thirties. Those who went up from it to travel or to seek their fortunes on the plains found a very different land and a very different people. That utter contrast is the key to much South African history.

Men going up direct to the plateaux, the Platteland, north-east through the Hex river pass or north from the Breede river valley over the first range of mountains that ran parallel to the coast, came out at once on to the Little Karoo 1500 feet up.

On that great plain, 300 miles long by 80 wide, it could be much hotter and much colder than in the genial coast lands. The early morning air struck sharp and scented with pungent bush smells and the smell of dust. There were frosts and snow in the hills in June. Rain came, when it did come, with violence on the south-east wind in summer, and tore away in flood down the deep river-beds, taking with it the surface soil through mountain gorges to the ocean, useless.

The plains stretched out, yellow and grey; dwarf willows that gave little shade and dark mimosas with cruel thorns marked the winding watercourses. Stunted karoo bush, grey-black with a hint of green and an indecent gap between one plant and the next, half clothed the stony plains as far as the eye could range. Ridges scarred laterally with ribs of harder rock broke the bleak expanse. In the middle distance the hills shewed up dark against the sky, a flat top and a conical top, conical and flat, and in the distance the mountains.

Northward, beyond the mountains, lay the Great Karoo, a harsher variant of the plains the traveller had just left, rather longer from east to west and fully three times as wide.

Parts of this Great Karoo were 4000 feet above the sea. The wind blew drier and more tempestuously than ever; such rain as came was heralded by thunder and lightning. Here were the same karoo bushes more grey-black than ever and fewer of them, the same ungrateful willows and mimosas, and succulents which nothing could quell. Here were the inevitable pairs of kopjes, the same rocks glaring in the sun, the earthy clay baked hard as flint, and stones everywhere.

On and on along the cattle-track marked out by the bones of sheep and oxen till evening. Then sky and earth would soften and take on all the gentlest colours of the rainbow and for a short hour the Karoo would be lovely. But it would be only at night, when the air was cool and the stars looked out of the clear dark down upon this dead heart of the Old Colony, that a man could forget that for many months, perhaps for the whole year, there would be hereabouts never a glimpse of that most blessed sight, running water.

North and north-east the Great Karoo swept up to the Nieuwveld and Sneeuwberg mountains, parts of the mountain backbone of southern Africa. On either side of this great escarpment ran a belt of better land, but after a while beyond the ranges this petered out into the treeless wastes of the Upper Karoo and Bushmanland. Those flats trailed away to the Orange river and beyond, while at their north-western edge they faded out into the stony desert that lay on either side of the mouth of the great river.

Yet the soil of both Karoos was rich and only asked for water. After the rains, perhaps once a year, even the Great Karoo was carpeted with flowers and, for a few precious weeks, men from all around would hurry down with their flocks, and those who must cross would cross at speed before the land went dead under their feet. And even in the 'thirties before the days of water-boring, men and beasts could live wherever springs welled up in the hollows of the hills. Such favoured spots were fairly frequent on the Little Karoo, but on the Great Karoo they were so rare that the great plain was to all intents and purposes a gap in the centre of the Colony. It cut off effectually those who passed round and beyond it from those who remained behind.

Trekkers had passed round the Great Karoo in the course of the eighteenth century. They had either gone to the south of it through the gentler Little Karoo or along the coast-belt, or else to the north of it along the strip of better land that lay beneath the great escarpment. Beyond Algoa Bay on the southern line of advance, and beyond Graaff-Reinet on the northern, they had begun to find good grazing and water, for they had reached the westerly limit of the fifteen-inch rainfall, and incidentally the debatable Bantu borderlands of the eastern frontier.¹ It was from the frontier districts to the north and east of the Great Karoo that the vast majority of the Trekkers were to go.

That being so, it would be well to gain a general idea of those frontier districts. Frontier conditions began on the southern line soon after leaving Swellendam. The

¹ E. A. Walker, 'Relief and the European Settlement of South Africa' (*Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. xlv, No. 1).

farms lay eight or ten miles apart and usually well back from the road, even if that meant fetching water from a distance, lest travellers' oxen eat up their pasture. They became steadily fewer till they gave way to the woodcutters' hovels of Knysna.

Thence the main road led over the mountains on to the Little Karoo and, then, between the mountain ranges of the Lange Kloof till it came out into the open near the London Missionary Society's station of Bethelsdorp. There it forked. One branch led to Uitenhage, a magistracy and in all save the absence of oaks very much like any village in the western districts; the other to Port Elizabeth on Algoa Bay, a thriving town of 1200 souls, mostly British, that had been opened recently as a warehousing port for the rapidly developing eastern districts.

From Port Elizabeth the main road ran over rolling grass downs dotted with patches of bush through the district of Albany, once upon a time called the Zuurveld, but now thoroughly English. Many of the British settlers who had been brought out at the Imperial Government's expense in 1820 survived, farming sheep and cattle like their Boer neighbours. Some few of them were already experimenting with merino wool.

In the centre of the Albany district lay Grahamstown, the frontier capital, with a garrison of regulars and Hottentots on which those of its 4000 inhabitants of various colours who could not take part in the Kaffirland trade reckoned to live. An English little place even to the build of its houses and the downs at the ends of the streets so like the downs round Winchester. Being English, Grahamstown had its own newspaper, the *Grahamstown Journal*, and no less than four churches. Wherefore it was called the City of the Saints.

The Fish river jungle, which gave cover to Kaffir cattle-rievers and border gun-runners, began an hour or two's ride north-west of Grahamstown. All along the valley of the Fish river outside this belt of bush the soil was rich, but the river-bed was too deep to permit of irrigation. North-westward, over a rise, in the valley of the Little Fish it was different. There, in the long-settled lands around the village of Somerset East, each farmhouse had a furrow that led water to its fruit and vegetable garden.

There were good grasslands eastward beyond the Fish as far as Kat river, but the main road did not run that way. It ran north over the hills through karoo country once more to Cradock, the usual cluster of little white houses. Cradock, founded twenty years back, was the magisterial and church centre of a district whose farms were large, full farms of 6000 acres or so, and whose Boers were well off in their own and others' estimation. Their herds of cattle were great. Towering piles of dung in front of the farmhouse doors were outstanding features of the landscape.

Turn in westward now to Graaff-Reinet, an oasis on the upper Sunday river at the junction of the Karoo cattle road and the new up-country road from Port Elizabeth. Graaff-Reinet was a town the size of Grahamstown, a magistracy, the site of the oldest church on this side of the desert and of a much more recent Government school. It was still the emporium for the interior and, at the moment, the deathbed of an experimental agricultural society.

Behind Graaff-Reinet lay the Sneeuwberg districts on either side of the range that bears that name and, in the winter, deserves it. Here were farms as good as any in all the borderlands. Nevertheless their owners

usually left them in May for the warmer northern plains that stretched along the Zeekoe river to its confluence with the Orange.

These plains were the north-eastern frontier lands of the Colony, great dreary expanses. Ten thousand acres hardly gave the water and grazing necessary for one family and its stock at the rate of one acre to each sheep and five to each head of cattle. There were no trees and no proper firewood. Men must use dung for fuel or thorns crackling under a pot, and drag poor building timber all the way up from Cradock. But game swarmed everywhere, and sons and *bywoners* (tenants-at-will) of the Sneeuwberg men were settled there alongside men of wealth and the poorest of the poor, the potential poor whites. And the district already had its village. A few years back a deserted mission station had marked the site of Colesberg, and now Colesberg promised to supplant Graaff-Reinet itself as the frontier base of supplies.

From Sneeuwberg westward it was sheep rather than cattle all the way to within a few days' trek of Cape Town. Beaufort West on the northern edge of the Great Karoo was the next dorp to Graaff-Reinet 130 miles away, a modest village still, and likely to remain so. It had been chosen as the seat of a magistrate because it was the best-watered spot for 150 miles around, yet in the year before the Great Trek began there had been no rain for four years. One local farmer told an English traveller then that the river was so brackish that it was undrinkable; the alkali in the soil had killed his garden; his third attempt to grow wheat that season had only produced a crop in patches; his cattle were dying; lions had just carried off two of his horses; he had had no bread for several weeks and

lacked the ammunition to kill game. Yet he seemed to take it all in the day's work, and there must have been scores like him.

Farther west in the forbidding Roggeveld conditions were even worse. Rain to make the rivers run might fail for five years at a time.¹ The small, cramped houses were built almost entirely of stone since beams were not to be had. Hyaenas, leopards and wild dogs played havoc with the horses, and beside wild beasts there were wild men. For this was *par excellence* the Bushman frontier.

Westward again to the bleak Hantam high on its mountain slopes, where for all the bleakness fruit did well in sheltered corners, the stubborn peach-tree flourished where no other tree would stand a chance, and corn and vegetables prospered where rivulets ran down the mountain-side.

Westward now for the last time into the Bokkeveld, sheep country still, past the reed hut of the farthestmost settler, then thirty miles on to the next hut, and so twenty miles farther, south at last, to the first substantial house. For in the Bokkeveld and even in the Hantam good timber could be had from the great Cedarberg that lay to the south of them on the main road to the capital.

Life in the frontier districts during the 'thirties was becoming somewhat more varied than it had been. There were officials, soldiers, ministers, schoolmasters, missionaries, pedlars, shopkeepers and artisans, these last usually Englishmen, Scots or Germans, where once upon a time there had been none. But their influence did not as yet extend far beyond the villages. Over

¹ In 1933 there had been no rain in some of these parts for three years, in others for five. Bore-holes were drying up.

great tracts of country life went on its accustomed way.

It was almost entirely a pastoral life. Where they could, farmers reckoned to grow fruit and vegetables for their families and a little corn for barter, but nowhere would they have more than three acres under the plough on farms of 6000 acres whether they ploughed with one of the new 'English' iron ploughs or, as most of them still did, with the archaic 'Boer' plough of wood and iron, heavy and not very effective.

It was sometimes a hard life, but there were thousands who loved it. At its best it was to them the *lekker lewe*, the life of ease. Where else except on the plains could a man, unhampered by neighbours white or black, find peace and space and security? 'Lift up thine eyes round about and see. . . Thy sons shall come from far and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. . . All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth. . . And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls.' What more could men want, especially men so deeply versed in the pastoral portions of the Old Testament as were the Afrikaner frontiersmen?

The men of the platteland were rougher editions of the well-built folk of the western districts, muscular, long-limbed, many of them over six feet tall, clean-shaven sometimes, often fully bearded, but very commonly bearded with the upper lip shaven. Some of the women were as tall as their sons and husbands, fair-haired for the most part, a point of pride to people who had lived for generations in daily contact with swarthy neighbours, and as one cautious Scot opined 'on the whole rather good-looking'.¹ All the more did visitors

¹ G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 104.

lament that both men and women so often ran to fat early in life.

Frontier costume was full of variety. European fashions reached Cape Town perhaps a year late, and in the course of another year travelled out to the frontiers gathering local modifications as they came; but since some folk in those parts clung to the fashions of their sires, others could not afford new clothes often, and all expected their clothes to last, fashions ranged over a good quarter of a century.¹

Men wore jacket, waistcoat and trousers. But there was more in the cut of these than mere fit and appearance, especially in the vital matter of trousers. Trousers were of the *klapbroek* type with a flap that buttoned up in front like navvies' corduroys. Most men saw to it that their trousers met the tails of their jackets and came down to the ankle or even to the tops of their shoes. And they kept their trousers up with belt or braces. Not so the Doppers, the Auld Lights of the Reformed Church. They held closely to the old ways in costume as well as in theology. They wore their jackets shorter than the generality; new-fangled braces were not for them, and they took no stock of belts. They fastened their trousers with draw-strings or with buckle and strap at the back, and, since these devices inevitably let their trousers sag, displayed a greater or less expanse of shirt. Like the light-rumped springbok, emblem of South Africa, the Dopper of the 'thirties could usually be recognised from behind afar off, and for the same reason.

The poorer folk wore leather clothes that were almost

¹ Many of these details of costume, equipment and furniture are to be found in the account given by L. C. de Klerk, *Voortrekkermense*, i, 215 ff., ed. G. A. Preller.

as soft as cloth unless they got wet, when they dried uncomfortably hard, while men at all stages of prosperity sometimes wore calfskin waistcoats with the dappled hair outwards. Doppers often affected coats of brown or blue nankeen with a blue or red stripe, others wore coats and waistcoats of woolly duffel, brown or tawny. But the usual materials for men's clothes were moleskin and, more rarely, smooth or ribbed corduroy, black, green, brown or dark yellow. Overcoats again were of duffel and week-day shirts of wool. Every man, however, would try to have also at least one suit of *kis-klere*, a carefully tended Sunday best: a linen shirt and corduroys for the rank and file, broad-cloth coat and waistcoat and cashmere trousers for the well-to-do, and perhaps white gloves for weddings.

Clothes were usually home-made; but whether recourse were had to a professional or not, material would be bought by the roll. There was no demand for ready-made clothing. Some folk, however, bought boots and shoes from *smouse* (pedlars) or at the village store, but to frontier ways of thinking, these cost overmuch and did not wear well. Most people, especially the women, still had their boots and veldschoens made for them by skilled cobblers, who, scorning tacks and nails, sewed finely with thin supple leather thongs for thread. Women wore stockings, but the men quite often not, and children rarely.

Hats were of many kinds. There were broad-brimmed straw hats with green linings. Hendrik Potgieter, one of the first of the Trek heroes, rode over half southern Africa in a hat of that sort. There were also high-crowned felt hats with brims of varying width either home-made or turned out by one of the hat factories which flourished in the Cape Colony of those days, hats

guaranteed to last a good five years barring accidents. A few flaunted it in pale dust-coloured bell toppers. Gerrit Maritz, the dandy of the Trek, was such an one. In the 'thirties men throughout the West clung to their top hats. They played cricket in them in England; in France they conducted duels and revolutions; in South Africa they trekked.

Women's dress was plain and sober. Not that they did not indulge in finery when they could. One Trekker lassie has recorded the costume she wore at her wedding: green silk dress, a little green hat with long streamers, white stockings, shoes and gloves. But that would seem to have been the exception. Dresses and petticoats usually ran in quiet lines of colour through every material from silk and linen by way of check and red or white flannel to thick woolly baize and leather. The dress (it is the description of an observant young man¹) had a turn-over collar, fairly wide sleeves fastened at the wrist, and flounces round the lower part of the skirt more or less numerous according to individual taste and patience.

The women never wore their hair loose, not even the little girls, but parted it in the middle, smoothed it back, and fastened it in a bun behind with a tortoiseshell comb. Some, more dashing, made up their front hair into little plaits and kept these in place with pins, a ribbon or a comb.

Little hats were for occasions. Usually the women wore big sun-bonnets of black or dull-coloured merino and even silk, but ordinarily of fine white linen. These *kappies* with their hems and tucks and embroideries were their pride and joy; it was these that critics (usually male critics) missed when they complained that Boer

¹ L. C. de Klerk, *vide* p. 32 n. 1.

women were untouched by finery.¹ Quite apart from looks the *kappie* had its uses. It shaded the whole face and neck, a great aid to the women in preserving the complexions in which they took such pride that, along the sun-bitten northern frontier, women and girls wore light goatskin masks when travelling to shield their faces from the dust and glare. Some women carried parasols, little things that could be adjusted to any angle on their sticks. Gloves were not common, but most of the women and girls had muffs as well as shawls of wool or silk.

So much for the appearance of the folk. What of their possessions? The chiefest of the possessions of a Boer were his horses and his oxen, his waggon and his guns. Without them the *lekker lewe*, or indeed any life worth living, would have been impossible on those vast plains.

Some well-to-do men in the West and even in the more remote East had fine horses of the strains that a sporting English governor had introduced a few years back, but most were content with colonial-bred animals. These were thicker set and uglier than European horses and could not draw such heavy loads; but they could go without shoeing, climb better, and do with much less fodder. They could cover sixty miles a day if they were not pushed too fast, going a good half of it at the tripple, an easy canter, and be none the worse for it after a good roll.²

Colonial-bred horses made fine steeds for hunting and for the Boer type of warfare which was not unlike hunting. They would follow steadily, stop at a touch, stand while their riders fired and reloaded, or, if their

¹ J. Howison, *European Colonies*, i, 351.

² G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 61.

masters dismounted, let them rest their heavy guns across their backs or necks. Many were trained for the lion hunt. Hottentots and the big, fierce mongrels that swarmed on every farm would be sent in to locate the quarry. Then the riders would link bridles and back their horses down to within thirty yards. Half the party would fire as the lion crouched for his spring. If that failed, the other half would fire as he sprang. If that failed . . . *dan moet jy 'n plan maak*.¹

Cape horses also went well in harness. To drive a four-horse waggon at a smart trot, knocking down small birds with the long whip as he went, was one of the accomplishments of the Afrikander.

Oxen were of two kinds. The one kind were short and compact, best for long hauls and short commons; the other taller and longer in the body, best for a short heavy strain across sand or up steep places. Both kinds were red and white or black and white. No Boer would put up with plain white or slate-grey oxen if he could help it. To have a fine well-matched span was the ambition of every young frontiersman. The collection of a span was the only interest that could compete with courtship, and often took much longer. To drive was not work, it was a pleasure.

Strictly speaking the oxen were not driven, for there were no reins. The driver would stand or sit on the front box of the waggon calling to each beast by name, cracking his whip or, if an ox eased off, flicking it with unerring aim. Each ox had its own place and was taught to know it. The two most powerful were yoked on either side of the *disselboom*, the single shaft that stood out from the front of the waggon, the rest were yoked two by two to the *trek touw*, the chain or stout leather

¹ 'Then you must make a plan!'

rope that was attached to the *disselboom*, the two wisest leading. On bad and narrow roads, or on crossing a drift—down one steep slope, crashing and splashing through the water and the boulders, and up the far incline with a rush—a boy, the *voorloper*, would lead the front pair, but not necessarily when the going was good.

A span varied from eight to sixteen beasts. On a level road twelve oxen might reckon to drag a waggon with the customary load of a short ton at three miles an hour, as fast as a man could conveniently walk, and unless they were overdriven, when they were apt to cave in suddenly, they could keep that up for eight hours or so.

But, for going over a pass, spans might have to be doubled. Up the slope to strike the lowest point of the track, a sheer wall of rock to the right, a drop to the left, and in front a winding ledge three yards wide badly blocked by boulders. The oxen would strain and stumble, fall and bellow, then stagger to their feet and go on again. Every 300 yards or so they must stop to regain breath, while the driver pushed stones in behind the wheels to prevent back-sliding. Sometimes no stop would be possible, and then the leaders must be kept going with the long whip and the wheelers lashed on with a hide sjambok, or, in the last resort, jabbed with an iron spur.

The body of a trek waggon was long in proportion to its breadth. It lay along a bed that was fixed to the sturdy rear axle but pivoted freely on the front. The four broad heavy wheels were shod with iron a good half-inch thick. Inside the waggon were four chests: one at the back, one along each side, and the fourth in front to serve as a driving box. A dozen semicircular hoops upheld a double canvas canopy over the whole or the greater part of the body, one canopy thickly

painted to keep out the wet, the other left white for the sake of coolness.

Waggons were stout and strong. Nothing else could have stood up to the dry climate and the execrable roads. Wherever possible they were held together by angle-blocks and leather thongs, so that if they were upset there would be less chance of the parts breaking, and if, as often happened, even double spans of oxen could not drag them up the passes, they could be taken to pieces, packed over the neck and reassembled on the other side.

Whether a man travelled on horseback or by waggon, he would take one or more guns with him. All the Boers could shoot, for on occasion their lives depended on their guns, and at all times they relied on them for part of their livelihood. These guns were almost without exception flintlocks, for flints were more easily come by than percussion caps. To the Boer of the 'thirties his gun was his *snaphaan*.

Single- or double-barrelled fowling-pieces firing buck-shot or round bullets at fourteen to the pound were in common use, but in the outlying parts, where a man chasing small game might find himself suddenly charged by a rhinoceros, men seldom travelled with anything smaller than an 'eight-pounder'. But there were more fearsome weapons than that. The elephant gun was a miniature cannon. It threw a projectile two-thirds lead and one-third tin at from six to four to the pound. Backed up as that was by a handful of black powder, the kick of an elephant gun might easily give an inexperienced man a bloody nose or a bruised cheek-bone.

Most of these guns were smooth-bores, but some had straight grooves, and, towards the close of the

Trek, a few had rolling rifling. Even smooth-bores were deadly at 100 yards. Frontiersmen made fine shooting with them. To earn the title of marksman a man must hit the small knuckle-bone of an ox at eighty paces.

The Boer carried his powder, a pound and a half to two pounds at a time, in an ox or buffalo horn sawn off at the tip and either plugged or fitted with a measure. But most men dispensed with this last, and learned by experience to shake out as much as they wanted into the palm of their hand. They carried their bullets and wads in the pockets of a broad leather bandolier. The bullets were of course round, but slugs were either set in cylinders of hard fat or sewn into oiled buckskin bags that slid down the barrel easily.

Occasionally men carried flintlock pistols, and all whose work took them much on to the veld carried sheath knives with blades from seven to eighteen inches long. *Herneuters* they called them, for the first of them had been made by the Herrnhutters¹ at their mission station^{*} at Genadendal away in the old western Colony.

Dwellings on the platteland were of many kinds. There was nothing here of the gabled homesteads of the Peninsula. Where building materials were hard to come by, houses were stores for belongings rather than shelters for their owners. Waggons and tents were the homes of many for part of each year and of some for all the year. Others in the wilder parts lived in reed huts. Any number lived in single-roomed cottages divided into two by a rush screen, sod-walled and thatched with reeds or grass. Rondavels of clay and thatch, native fashion, were common along the eastern frontier, roomy and cool for all their humble looks.

The houses of Boers like those of the Sneeuwberg

¹ Moravian Brethren.

behind Graaff-Reinet, who were more comfortable than were most of their fellows, were big oblong barns, thatched and whitewashed, each with two or three rooms. The largest of these served as store, kitchen, dining- and sitting-room, as well as bedroom for strangers who must find what rest they could while slaves and Hottentots squatted muttering round the fire, and cats and dogs and chickens prowled or tiptoed over their persons. The other rooms were the family bedrooms. Wealthier men might have a separate kitchen.

Floors were sometimes of wood but quite as often of trampled dung washed carefully from time to time with dung and water to keep them fresh and shiny and to ward off flies. If the flies still came, and they always did in the hot weather, a child must wield the fly-whisk during meals. There might be a yellow-wood ceiling with a loft above, but ordinarily there was nothing below the sweet-smelling thatch, warm in winter and cool in summer, and silent even when hail beat down. Mealie cobs hung from the rafters, tobacco in leaf and in roll, thin strips of *biltong* (sun-dried meat) and perhaps the carcass of a freshly killed sheep for the day's rations. Paterfamilias kept his papers, if he had any, in the angles formed by the rafters and the cross-beams.

There was little of the handsome furniture of the Peninsula and the farm-lands hereabouts. Wealthy men might have curtained four-posters, a piece or two of good old-fashioned furniture trekked all the way up-country by their grandfathers, and some willow pattern china with a family history; but most men had to be content with simpler things than these: strong wooden bedsteads strung across with *riempies* (leather thongs) and made up with coverlets and feather-beds, spare bedding and rush mats for visitors, two or three roomy

waggon chests, a couple of deal tables, and *riempie* chairs and stools supplemented by the whitened skulls of oxen as seats along the stoep. Of lighter articles there would be iron pots, one in continual use over the open hearth, a big copper jug or two, earthenware dishes, plates, mugs, and maybe cups and saucers. Or else the table-ware would be of tin. But none of the modern jam-tin *blikkies*. This was real tin worthy to be melted down and mixed with lead for bullets, to the fury of the housewife.

Boers near the infrequent villages could shop regularly, but the rest had to lay in supplies once or twice a year or rely on pedlars, whom as often as not they would pay in kind. Hard money and even paper money were not plentiful in the frontier districts. Pedlars brought clothing materials, crockery, brandy and sometimes wine in little barrels, medicines in bottles and tins: camphor, senna beans, buchu, Haarlemer olie and the jalap by which Boers set great store. But the most important thing these *smouse* brought was gunpowder; they were sure of a market for that when all else failed. The Boers depended on powder for game, maybe for life, and, if they were out on the veld without a tinder-box, for fire and light. For then a man must wrap powder in a rag and hit it with a stone till it flared up or else snap his flintlock on to it.

The farm and the veld supplied the Boers with the bare necessities. Even on the farms men reckoned to shoot for the pot, while men on trek and young men starting in life would live as much as possible on game and thus spare their flocks. The plains swarmed with living creatures of all kinds: lions, rhinoceroses, zebras and buffaloes, hippopotami in the river pools whose fat made good eating, quagga, and stately kudu in the

warm river valleys of the north-east, gnus with 'stout strong curly horns' and a nasty way of turning on their pursuers when wounded, and springbok, springbok everywhere.

Sometimes the springbok trooped down in mass formation, eating up everything like locusts. Wave upon wave they would come, running and leaping, so densely packed that a good marksman could bring down half a dozen at a shot. Then they would disappear with a scutter of white tails, leaving the farmer to contemplate the desolation that had been his season's grazing. But at the worst they offered an easy and welcome alternative to killing the sheep on whose fat men must rely for soap, candles and waggon grease as well as dripping.

Meals on the farms, twice or thrice a day, were plentiful but monotonous. In the southern coast-strip and the Lange Kloof, a poor country, it was mutton boiled to rags or stewed in sheep-tail fat, and pumpkins, pumpkins all the way. But farther inland, in addition to these two staples, there would be soup, boiled corn and mealies, boer meal bread perhaps though not always, and milk rarely enough to be noted as a luxury by travellers. There never was much milk except just after the cows had calved, and most of what there was went into butter. Luxuries there were: cayenne pepper, vinegar, home-made pickles and dried fruit, tea, coffee, Cape brandy to be taken neat lest the brackish water spoil it, sometimes even a little wine, but beer never so far from Cape Town. From necessity and high prices as well as from habit, the sheep and cattle men were even more temperate than the Afrikanders of the capital and the farm-lands. But they had plenty of tobacco, strong stuff with a bite. The men-folk found solace in their pipes, which were often made of soft stone, beauti-

fully coloured and curiously carved with a boss below the bowl to hold them by when they grew hot.

The tea-table was a feature of the house. As in the farm-lands, the mistress spent much of her time there ready to serve tea or coffee to all comers, or, if these beverages ran out, a decoction of roasted grain that was at least hot and wet and, in the case of a favoured guest, rendered not unpalatable by the addition of a piece of sugar candy which would be kept in the mouth while drinking.

If the traveller arrived between meals, he would probably be offered nothing but tea or coffee; but if a meal were toward, he would be expected to help himself without more ado. That was the custom of the country. Open-house was so universal that travellers recorded with surprise the rare occasions where it was denied them, and even then a little tact would almost certainly call it forth. Indeed, if the family were away and the house locked up, the chances were that a slave or a Hottentot would emerge from a hut and tell the disappointed traveller to break in and make himself at home. No one would mind; rather would the good man of the house be distressed if he did not.

Nevertheless, there were some who felt that this Boer hospitality, like so much else on the plains, was *sui generis*.¹ The whole business struck them as a matter of routine, and the personal questions that were certain to be fired at them sooner or later as impertinent curiosity. At times, in remoter parts, they suspected xenophobia and, rather than face it, would camp in their own waggons.

Probably the fault lay as much with these travellers as with their saturnine hosts. Much better face the

¹ J. Howison, *op. cit.*, i, 347 ff.

questionnaire cheerfully: 'Who are you? Where do you come from? Whither are you going? What is your profession? What is your age? Are you married? . . .'¹ After all, Boers lived isolated lives and the arrival of a visitor not of their own kind was an event. Besides, if a stranger was to spend the night at their house ten or twenty miles from the next, it were well to find out what they could about him. He might be an angel unawares, but not for certain.

There was little privacy for the traveller, adaptable or unadaptable, in a Boer homestead. There was not much privacy for anyone. Living as they did, the Boers had little idea of it and little conception that anyone might desire it. They were clannish. In some districts where members of a single stock formed the bulk of the inhabitants, relatives were constantly in and out of each other's houses, which already sheltered large families. Ten children living was nothing out of the way in those prolific days when girls married young after a short courtship and became heroic mothers of children, and widowers married again and yet again dauntlessly. Sixteen, seventeen, nineteen children might be born to couples still in the middle forties; there is record of one woman of forty-six who had buried three children, married off the remaining fourteen, and rejoiced in eighty-six grandchildren. The frontier districts could face a high death-rate with a birth-rate of those proportions.² And sometimes the large-hearted Boers were not content with the process of Nature. They adopted children readily.

¹ G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 70 ff.

² *Ibid.*, i, 26, 274; H. Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa* (Van Riebeeck Society, Nos. 10 and 11), i, 134, 139, 166 n., 175, 182, 211, 225; ii, 24, 102 ff.

Under such circumstances, how could the pastoralists ever be alone except out on the veld? At home the only relief the men could get from the full impact of family life was by sitting on the stoep in fine weather or, if it were wet and cold, forgoing with their pipes round an iron pot full of glowing charcoal at one end of the room, while their women-folk sat together with their feet on *konfoortjies* (little braziers) at the other. Thus the two sexes at least need not meet except at meals.

Not that the Boers scorned their wives. They had little cause to do so. As was to be expected, the women were usually gentler mannered than the men, but they were ordinarily resolute, and courageous in time of danger. Some of them gave ample proof of that as instigators of the Great Trek and confirmers of the courage of their men during more than one crisis in the foundation of the republics.

Doubtless this firmness and resource arose mainly from the fact that the bulk of the work of the household fell upon the women, and household duties were more multifarious than the simple pastoral occupations of their men. Constant practice in 'bossing up' slack, inefficient and often unwilling servants bred the faculty of command. The mistress of the house might spend much of her time sitting at or near the tea-table where travellers saw her, but she was sitting on a throne, sometimes with a stick for a sceptre, commanding her satellites: slaves, Hottentots, an occasional Bushman girl who might have to be tied to the table-leg at night to prevent her flitting, each with his or her particular job to do and no more. A wearing task in all conscience.

There was for many of these housewives the annual strain of childbirth with no medical aid and, often

enough, no help even from an old woman with a rule-of-thumb knowledge of midwifery. Luckily they usually bore it easily and well. Even the ladies of the town rarely died in childbed but were up and about their duties on the eighth day. Frontier women were capable of driving or even riding in with the newborn baby to the nearest church, perhaps 100 miles away, on the second Sunday after the event.¹

It was the mothers who had to doctor and nurse the family in case of need. They might be able to get the help of wise women skilled in the use of native medicinal plants, the *bossiemiddels* by which even highly placed Transvaal veterans swore to the very end of the nineteenth century in preference to all the medicaments of the West.² Still more rarely had they a chance of calling in a doctor. And if they did consult a doctor, usually too late, they went to him rather as a purveyor of drugs than as a practitioner. They wanted something in a bottle and bought medicines with avidity.

Generally speaking the plattelanders were healthy, as they had need to be if they were to survive. The dreaded smallpox of the eighteenth century had died out in the dry clean air of the plains, but children suffered much from quinsy; in some parts there was dysentery in plenty, ague, eruptions and sore eyes. Venereal disease was rare but, being wrongly treated, was apt to be serious when it did occur. Stone and gout were common, and rheumatism was prevalent, for though the Boers kept out of the rain as much as they could (and rain was rain in their part of the world), if they did get wet, they usually let their clothes dry on them.

Crowded homes, endless household duties, the con-

¹ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, i, 166 and note.

² Deneys Reitz, *Commando*, p. 17.

tinual battle with the servants, sick-nursing and dosing and the anxiety that goes therewith, one child coming or at the breast and another plucking at her skirt, too much strong tea (we have a doctor's word for it), and the task of educating some at least of the youngsters . . . no wonder Boer women were inclined to be vehement and even hysterical.¹

The elementary schools which always went with the churches were scarce in the frontier districts. The Government schools that had been opened in some of the villages ten years or so before the Trek began were still fewer, and it was only the children of the well-to-do who could come in to these. The rest must be content with what their mothers, and perhaps their fathers also, could teach them, with maybe a spell at the feet of a peripatetic *meester*, often an ex-soldier, who would be honoured by all as a learned man even if he did sometimes lift his elbow, and who, in return for his keep and a few shillings monthly, would reckon to teach his charges all he had to teach in the course of a few months.

Except in the higher forms of the new State schools the content of education was slight. Children must learn to figure a little, usually in their heads; to write round copybook hand with a goose-quill and, when the ink failed, a compost of vinegar and iron stiffened with tree gum; to read, and to sing lest their parents be shamed in the face of the congregation.

Reading began with an A B C book in rhyme with pictures of Adam and Eve and other suitable subjects; then words of two syllables; then a more ambitious High Dutch spelling-book, *Trap der Jeugd, videlicet Gradatim*. That would enable the scholar to read and learn the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the

¹ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, i, 131, 167; J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, ii, 259.

Twelve Articles of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism as the necessary preparation for his admission as a full member of the Reformed Church.

There was little need to go farther than that. Education led up to Church membership and, apart from well-thumbed copies of Colonial newspapers on the rounds from house to house and, in the more peopled parts, an odd journal from Europe, there was nothing to read on most farms except religious books: the Bible, psalms, hymns, the catechism and an explanatory guide thereto, and volumes of antique sermons, *Donderslag der Goddelozen* and the like, with notes and perhaps a biography of the author. Like contemporary Scottish education, Boer education tended to produce a serious-minded folk.¹

The frontier farmers of the 'thirties were necessarily limited and ignorant of many things. It could not have been otherwise. They were out of touch with the great world and even with the little world of Cape Town in some ways more completely than even their fathers had been. Their fathers had at least gone once in their lives to the capital, they and their brides-to-be, to face the Matrimonial Court. But a quarter of a century since, couples had been permitted to appear at the nearest magistracy. Hence, scores of the men and women who went out on the Great Trek had never seen a town in their lives, at most a dorp of 4000 inhabitants. Their knowledge of the older parts of their Colony was apt to be sketchy and, in times of excitement, highly erroneous, while their conception of the outer world was sometimes 100 years out of date.

¹ J. Howison, *op. cit.*, i, 350; *Voortrekkermense*, i (de Klerk); E. G. Malherbe, *Education in South Africa*, pp. 19 ff.; B. Spoelstra, *Ons Volkslewe*, pp. 58 ff.

Lack of book-learning and knowledge of the world could be remedied and have been remedied handsomely by many descendants of these same Boers. Lack of imagination is not so easily remedied, and there certainly was that lack. There need be no surprise that some of them dubbed an eager botanist 'the silly flower gentleman' as soon as they had ascertained that his spoils were not for sale, or that they told another voyager that he could not expect them to believe that anyone would travel through such a countryside as theirs for the fun of the thing.¹ More sophisticated folk than they, and not in their time and place alone, have held similar views of the ways of scientists and the 'satiabie curiosity' of the globe-trotter.

It was more than that. Perhaps imagination was deadened by the sameness of the Karoo scenery. The repetition of the names of the farms tells the story: Modderfontein, Brakfontein, Bitterfontein, with here and there a Blinkfontein where the water pools had shone invitingly to the straining eyes of the first comer. But even beneath the towering shadow of the Cedarberg hardly anyone seemed to know the name of the great mountain. Each of their trek oxen had its name, but the mountain was *die berg* and there was an end of it.² Why trouble about it unless you had to climb it?

That attitude pointed to an hereditary preoccupation with concrete, matter of fact, personal things and with not much else. Apart from the psalms and hymns, the Boers of those days had little in the way of songs or poetry or folk-lore; if their ancestors had had any, their successors had let them die and had not made any for

¹ J. Howison, *op. cit.*, i, 349.

² G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 82; J. Campbell, *Travels in Africa*, p. 338.

themselves. Was it their rigid Calvinism or isolation in the wilds or both together that had done that?

The children had the games universal to children;¹ but the boys' chief plaything was the long waggon-whip; the youths, when they got together (so the Frenchman Delegorgue saw them in camp in Zululand), 'gave themselves up to meaningless games, wrestled without skill, or sought to shine by the rudest jokes'.² There was dancing for the young folks to the strains of the violin and concertina and maybe the cornet and flute as well. But dancing had to be more or less *sub rosa*. The straiter sort ranked it with cards as a snare of the Devil, while even the more liberal-minded seniors rarely took part, at least if there was a clergyman or an elder in the vicinity. Rather did they turn the Nelson eye upon it, go to bed early, and let the lads and lasses have their fling. In some parts, notably in the Transvaal, dances still take place, by the way as it were, only after picnics and suchlike blameless social functions.

There was little in their lives to rouse the Boers of the 'thirties except when war threatened or a hunt was toward. Everything else induced to slackness and the avoidance of trouble. The trek ox paces slowly, and the Boers kept pace with their oxen. There were times when life was strenuous, but only times. For long periods of each year father and sons might shoot a little and then potter about the house or sit smoking on the stoep till evening came and they must count the beasts as the Hottentots drove them home to add their quota to the ancestral dunghill. There were skilled and industrious Afrikander waggon-makers in the vill-

¹ B. Spoelstra, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 ff.

² J. Bird, *op. cit.*, i, 563 (q. A. Delegorgue, *Voyage dans l'Afrique Australe* . . . *durant les années 1838-44*).

ages; occasionally sons would be found on the farms who were good carpenters or blacksmiths, but most men were pastoralists, that and nothing more.

It is easy to blame the Boers for their leisureliness and lack of enterprise; but praise or blame is really beside the point. The Boer was son and son's son of men who had lived just the life that he was leading. Why should he exert himself when slave or dirt-cheap Hottentot labour was ready to hand? Why should he go out of his way to acquire comforts he had never known when he could satisfy his wants so easily? Above all, why should he irrigate, grow this and that, produce for the market, when there never had been a market for anything except meat and an occasional load of butter, candles and dried fruit since his forbears had drifted, maybe more than a century ago, out of touch with Cape Town and the ships? It was only during the last decade or so that towns like Grahamstown, Graaff-Reinet and Port Elizabeth had promised to afford good local markets in the frontier lands. And whether the market be far or near, there was still nothing like meat. Sheep and cattle could walk to market, and there was usually a demand for them. For the rest, subsistence farming had been the pastoralist's habit and he saw no reason for changing it.

Perhaps also it is easy to exaggerate the monotony and uneventfulness of Boer life in those days. Pastoral farming in South Africa could be an anxious business at times, what with springboks or locusts on the move, raids by wild beasts, or raids by savage men. Life in large families had excitements of its own, and did these fail there were always the neighbours.

As was to be expected of the descendants of Netherlanders, Huguenots and West Germans, the Boers

were legalistically minded, not to say litigious. There was plenty to quarrel about: land and water and grazing rights, and sometimes these feuds ran along family lines. Too little to do and too much time to do it in set men brooding over their wrongs and bred in them 'bitterness and irreconcilable animosity'. What were a bland Batavian Commissioner and a gentle German doctor going the rounds together to think of the *verklarings* that poured in upon them everywhere in the platteland? And notably at Graaff-Reinet. 'Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain'—where man after man produced a sheaf of these indictments duly attested by witnesses detailing every snub, affront or slur upon his reputation he had suffered these many years.¹ True, antagonists rarely passed from words to blows; nor, as a rule, did they violate the decencies of speech.² But there could be no mistaking the depth of feeling behind the innocuous words.

It was in this atmosphere that the Trekkers grew up. Rancour was destined more than once to bring the Trek and the Republics into jeopardy.

Fortunately the life of a Boer family was not all isolation. There were the rounds of family visits, and there were musters in greater strength. Unlike the townsmen and wine farmers, they could not always celebrate christenings; the churches were too far away for that. Nor did they always mark birthdays with feasting. But they had their high days and holidays. As in Scotland, New Year's Day, ushered in with volleys of musketry, quite overshadowed Christmas; the wedding ceremony was followed by a feast, speeches, toasts and as often as not a dance for the young folks; at auctions,

¹ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, i, 133, 158, 453, 464; G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 389.

² H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, i, 389.

the frontiersman's nearest approach to a fair, the purchaser of the farm must stand all-comers a square meal; as in Scotland again, funerals afforded sombre relaxation to many. Notices detailing the virtues and achievements of the deceased would be sent out far and wide, neighbours would troop in for scores of miles around to pay their last respects, and the burial would be followed by the funeral feast.

But when all is said and done it was war and religion, commando service and Nagmaal (Holy Communion), that held the Boers together as a people.

From the first, burghers had been obliged to serve alongside the regular troops against foreign invaders or natives or criminals, or, if they were not called up personally, to contribute in money, transport or kind. Presently, as the cattle men drifted out of reach of the Castle and its garrison, purely burgher commandos had taken the field looking only to the central government for ammunition and a complacent acceptance of their reports after each campaign. Since the turn of the century, when central government had begun to catch up the frontiersmen, the troops had taken part again, but the commando system had remained the flexible instrument it had been for so long.

It was suited admirably to the instincts of a mobile people. Movement was one of the most outstanding features of life in the frontier districts. When rain sent the rivers down in spate across any main road, the rapid gathering of men and beasts at the drifts would prove how much coming and going there was. From among folk who moved thus readily, the magistrate of a thinly peopled district could reckon on calling up several hundred men within six hours.¹ Once he had given the

¹ G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, i, 66.

word to the field-cornets, and they to the farmers and their numerous sons, the women-folk would cram *beskuit* (hard-baked bread) and *biltong* into the saddle-bags, the Hottentot *agterryers* (grooms) would take charge of the guns and spare horses, the burghers would scramble into the saddle and—off to the magistracy to draw their ammunition. Must they sleep in the open, their saddles served as pillows, and the knee-haltered horses could not wander far; as for a change of clothing, there was little call for that either at home or on the veld. The Boers were used to life in the open. A hunting party, a mere wander round in waggons, was—let it be confessed frankly—a relief from insistent family ties. Commando service was something of the same kind on a bigger scale, a great and heartening gathering of men who did not ordinarily see much of one another, almost a holiday if the rations were plentiful. It might even be a profitable business, the starting-point of a young man's fortunes, at all events along the Kaffir frontier where the loot would be in cattle. Even along the barren northern frontier there might be one or two little Bushman servants to take home to the wife. Nor was there need to trouble too much about discipline or camp rules under officers who were often of their men's own choosing.

War service was a potent bond of union but it was necessarily intermittent in its operation. Religion, on the contrary, was a perpetual reminder to the Boers that they were one people. They were all good Calvinists of the Dutch Reformed Church. Some of them were Doppers and extremely strict. Doppers regarded music in God's house as an abomination and eschewed hymns because, unlike the psalms, they were not to be found in the Bible. They would have been Separatists

had there been clergy of that persuasion available, and, when such ministers did come forward in the late 'fifties, Separatists they became in the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and the north-eastern Cape Colony.

The mouths of the frontiersmen were full of Scripture, as full as had been the mouths of Cromwell's Ironsides to whose century they really belonged intellectually, and whom the best of them resembled in all things save discipline. But here is nought for wonder. The Bible was the one book they could all read or half read, half recite; it was their daily, most often their only literary exercise. Early in the morning and again at evening the whole household would meet for prayers; only under stress of most unusual circumstances would these ceremonies be pretermitted. Christians, that is, Europeans, would sit round the table, the slaves and Hottentots would squat against the wall. Always there would be a psalm sung very solemnly and slow, and the reading of a portion; perhaps also extracts from a book of sermons, then another psalm and a blessing. On Sunday the sermon would be read as a matter of course, and a distinguished guest, such as a visiting official or a missionary, would be invited to read the lesson.

Brought up thus on the Bible and living a pastoral life, it followed that the Old Testament was extraordinarily real to them—so real that the first cattlemen who reached the Fish river valley in the seventeen-seventies, finding great heaps of stones piled on the graves perhaps of Hottentot chieftains, concluded that these must be monuments left by the Children of Israel in their wanderings; wherefore the place is called *Israelitische Kloof* unto this day.¹ Three-quarters of a century later,

¹ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, i, 431.

the *Jerusalemgangers* of the western Transvaal were with difficulty dissuaded from trekking to Zion down the river which they believed firmly was the Nile.¹ The river is still called Nyl river, but Zion does not lie that way.

The Church had always stood to the Boers for salvation and, with its elementary schools, for education also. These two things were linked indissolubly in their minds, and a thrill of dismay had run through the backveld, and not the backveld alone, when the reforming Batavians had proposed to set up State schools more or less free from clerical control. But it was the Boers who had clung to the Church rather than the Church to them. Throughout the long eighteenth century, until 1792 to be precise, there had been neither church nor minister in all the vast plains that lay outside the mediterranean farm-belt of the south-west. Since then, and especially during the decade immediately preceding the Great Trek, the Church, reinforced by Scottish Presbyterian ministers, had begun to go out in search of its sheep in the wilderness. It had found them true to the tradition of the western Colony that each village should have a church and that the church should be the finest building in the village. It was a tradition that in due time the Trekkers took with them out beyond the Old Colony.

Churches were scarce in the frontier districts in the early 'thirties. A sermon from a predikant was an event for the majority of the Boers, but they saw to it that they enjoyed it quarterly if it might be, at the very least once a year, when they and their families trooped in for 100 miles around for Nagmaal. In the new and

¹ S. P. Engelbrecht, *Geschiedenis van die Nederduits Hervormde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, i, 40.

sparsely peopled district of Colesberg on the eve of the Trek, sometimes more than 200 waggon-loads of them would come to camp for the long week-end from Thursday onward in the wide dusty square round the still unfinished church.¹ They would fill the square with life and sound: talk from the tents, Hottentots screaming at the lowing oxen, dogs barking, the strains of a violin here and there, women cooking and gossiping, children tumbling around, the youths and maidens off together on their several occasions, and over all the good smell of cattle and tobacco and wood smoke. Business on Friday with the storekeeper, the magistrate and each other, and on Saturday the preparatory service; then in the Sabbath calm of the morrow to church in their stiff blacks or carefully tended corduroys, and on Monday very early the long trail home.

It might be that the religion of the frontiersmen was often a narrow thing amounting even to the bigotry that incensed liberal-minded visitors; it might be fatalistic, as when a mother could refuse to have her child's physical defect remedied because 'as God had appointed it she could not alter it', or a man decline to raise his hand against a plague of locusts because they were 'a punishment from the Lord'.² Religion might be for many rather a matter of long prayers and hymn-singing than of 'obedience to authority and brotherly love'.³ The Boers were not singular in these things, and, as for fatalism, life in and around the Karoos was apt to breed such an attitude towards a God whose ways

¹ A. Steedman, *Wanderings and Adventures . . .*, i, 165 ff.; B. Spoelstra, *op. cit.*, pp. 30 ff.

² J. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 327; *Notulen* (1st Volksraad, S.A. Republic), 22 July 1892.

³ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, ii, 219.

clearly passed understanding and from whose decrees there was no appeal.

Be all that as it may, religion was a real thing to the Boers, real enough to have prevented them from becoming 'wholly degenerate and savage'. They owed it to religion first and then to their wives, who woman-like clung to the amenities of life and the consolations of the Church more desperately than the men, that in the course of their long wanderings among the 'heathen' they had not sunk to their level as Westerners sometimes feared they might sink, and the borderers in both the Americas of their day were actually sinking.¹

¹ H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, ii, 120; G. Thompson, *op. cit.*, ii, 116.

CHAPTER III

THE CAUSES OF THE GREAT TREK

The Negro who understands his proper relation to the white man in this country will be gladly received by the people of Mississippi as we are very much in need of labour.

THE GOVERNOR OF MISSISSIPPI, JANUARY 1920

Old Kaintuck ain't no place for a poor man no more.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FATHER

THE frontier Boers of the eighteen-thirties (and the frontier covered four-fifths of the area of the entire Cape Colony) were a scripturally minded folk. Even if the Bible had not been to many of them in the most literal sense *The Book*, the only book, they must have been drawn towards it, and towards the Old Testament in especial, because there was told the story of a pastoral, semi-nomadic people very like themselves. Whether or no they also could claim to be a Chosen People—and on that score some of them had their own opinions—their story was a remarkable one. Men and women whose forbears had come from the Netherlands, Huguenot France, West Germany, from stable, rooted, crowded societies, were now pastoralists who had either struck back or at a pinch were ready to strike back for a time to the life of those ancient trekkers who had plagued Rameses III and Honorius and the Han Emperors of China.

That metamorphosis had not been wrought in a day.

Long years before any of them went out on the Great Trek the Boers had been a folk ill qualified for the benison of Carlyle's ninth Beatitude, 'Blessed is the man that remaineth where he is'.

The intention of the Dutch East India Company had been to have a compact colony in the mediterranean lands behind Cape Town at the turning-point of Africa. An intelligent visitor during the first decade of the eighteenth century would probably have concluded that, after sixty years, the Company was succeeding, that the Cape was well on the way to becoming an African Virginia. The intelligent visitor would have been wrong. Forces were already at work which were giving the development of the Cape Colony an utterly different turn.

The Company had recently given up its scheme of assisted immigration. It had done so when the free, that is, the non-official European inhabitants, men, women and children, numbered less than 2000. For more than 100 years thereafter immigrants were to be few and far between. Not until 1820, when the British Government planted British settlers at the extreme south-eastern corner of the Colony beyond Algoa Bay, was there to be any notable addition to the population from outside. The original inhabitants had been left to make their way, a tiny community. They were destined to intermarry and breed lustily, to absorb the few new-comers, to become one people.

That handful of foundation members of the Cape Colony had been virtually marooned by the Company. Cape Town, the Colony's one point of contact with the outer world, was thousands of miles from anywhere. Northward it was a three months' voyage to the Texel and another three months to Java eastward; to the

south lay the roaring forties and the Antarctic ice, to the north all black Africa. Even such other outposts of civilisation as were near at hand upon the map were as inaccessible as the Antipodes, for until almost the end of its rule the Company forbade its subjects to trade or to own a ship. There was life and variety in Cape Town itself what with the Company's servants and soldiers and sailors drawn from half Europe. Even so, except in war-time or when the Company's flotillas came in, Cape Town was never a really stirring place during the long years of Company governance. Only towards the close of the eighteenth century with things moving fast in India was it drawn into the main current of world events. And by that time the Boers had long been out of touch with windswept Table Bay and the town on its shores.

From the first the free burghers had kept cattle and, in defiance of the Company's commands, had traded cattle with the Hottentots. They had gone farther and farther afield hunting and bartering, till by the end of the seventeenth century there were *rondswervende* folk, often the younger sons or overseers of established farmers, permanently beyond the settled Colony.¹ They lived by the gun or on fat mutton; they were ready to do without beer and wine, content to pitch their tents beside water, to build a thorn-bush kraal for their beasts at night since there were still lions and leopards about, and to hollow out an ant-heap for an oven in which their wives must bake such flour as they might have. Not a bad life for young fellows, but hard on the women and children.

At the very time that our hypothetical visitor was speculating on the future of the Colony, these cattle and

¹ L. Fouche, *Die Evolutie van die Trekboer* (passim).

sheep men had gone out upon the plains above and beyond the mountains, and the Company had really given up all attempt to rule them. Once or twice thereafter it made spasmodic efforts, but these came to nothing. For a good three-score years it left the frontiersmen to their own devices on or around the Karoos. Those harsh plains and skies set their mark upon the Afrikander cattle farmers, imposed a special kind of life upon them, made them trekkers.

Once upon the plains above the mountains there was little to induce them to come back, and everything to induce them to scatter. No one would face the mountain passes again without good cause; no one would venture into Cape Town, unless needs must, to be taxed by rapacious officials and imposed upon by sophisticated townsmen. Cattle and sheep were the obvious sources of wealth so far from the only market, and cattle and sheep demanded plenty of space on those arid plains. Men must be prepared to wander and to live far distant from their nearest neighbours. This the Boers could do with safety, for there were not many natives, and such as there were made but a poor resistance. The Hottentots, more than once decimated by smallpox, soon made common cause with the white men against the Bushmen, and the Bushmen, never numerous, only made serious resistance when the invaders had pushed them back into each successive range of mountains.

The land law of the Company was in essence Roman-Dutch. Its principles of the legitimate portion and, in the event of intestacy, equal division helped to disperse large families of sons each of whom proposed to follow in his father's footsteps as a rancher. Land was easily come by. Hunters would report good grazing farther on, always farther on; and an exploring party, a *kommissie*

trek, would go forward to spy out the land. All that need then be done was to stake out claims, half an hour's ride at a smart walk each way from a central point, memorialise the Governor through the nearest magistrate, and, while the slow machinery of the law ground out the necessary permit, occupy the 'request place' and risk being recalled. The risk was slight.

The tenure of these cattle-runs was easy. Nominally they were loan-places, each of 6000 acres or so, held on a revocable annual lease on payment of a £5 recognition fee and a tithe of the grain grown, if any. But since the Company compensated the occupant for the *opstal*, that is, buildings and improvements, if it chanced to revoke the lease, and further allowed loan-places to change hands at prices which obviously included the land with the *opstal*, these farms were to all intents and purposes free grants of land. Long before the eighteenth century was half-way through, the frontiersmen had it fixed firmly in their minds that one cattle-run at least was the birthright of the Afrikander, that a farm to be a farm must be of 6000 acres, and that the rent of a farm was £5 annually, that and no more.

Living in patriarchal isolation, the Boers developed a lively sense of self-reliance and independence. They held as of faith that a man might do what he would with his own, including the slaves and Hottentots the good Lord had provided for the service of Christian men.

There always had been slaves in the Colony. The Company had begun to import them from various parts of Africa and the East Indies about the same time that it planted the first free burghers on their farms. Slaves were the other side of white settlement. Soon they had outnumbered the Europeans and continued to do so

for 100 years. Meanwhile the Hottentot tribesmen, having bartered away their cattle and grazing rights and having drunk most of the proceeds, had either moved away inland or become down-at-heel and pungent hangers-on of white society. Yellow Hottentot, brown Asiatic and black African had intermingled their blood and crossed that mixed strain with white European. Thus the Cape Coloured folk had emerged. By the time of the Trek the slaves were really the servile section of these folk, the Hottentots the non-servile section. By long use and wont the Boers regarded both with the slave-owner's eye."

As for the Bushmen and presently the Bantu, they were heathen, and according to the frontier reading of Holy Scripture it was the Christian meek who were to inherit the earth. Nay, more, there were frontiersmen who said openly that African natives were children of Ham and might therefore be treated if necessary as men hated of God.¹ Even those who did not go so far took it for granted that they themselves were in all things privileged as against brown men and black. That idea fitted in with their experience of life for generations among folk clearly less fortunate than themselves, and perhaps also with the comfortable doctrine of election which had been embedded in the seventeenth-century Calvinism their forefathers had brought with them over the mountains.

Independent though they were, these strong-willed Boers were not hostile to all law and government. They had a long tradition of both. Central legislative and executive power lay with the Governor and his Council

¹ J. A. De Mist, *Memorie over de Caab* (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 3, with translation), pp. 256-7; A. Van Pallandt, *General Remarks on the Cape . . .* (translation), p. 12; J. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

at the Castle. It always had done so. But the people must have a voice in their own governance. That again had been so in the memory of man. The central Court was the Governor's Council reinforced by burgher councillors. There were also other boards at the capital, partly official, partly non-official. That was how it should be. At each local centre there was a landdrost, a magistrate, armed with executive and judicial powers, but the landdrost was checked by a board of local heemraden. Below them were the field-commandants and the field-cornets of the wards, burghers once more. The Church, again, might be under strict governmental control, but each congregation had its elders and deacons. And the powers of these popular representatives, deacons, elders, heemraden, burgher councillors and the rest, were greater in practice than on paper.

The Boers took all that for granted, but the only parts of it that had really come home to them for two generations in the mid-eighteenth century had been the field-cornets and field-commandants. The landdrost and his heemraden had been in the background, in the end as far in the background as Swellendam is from Somerset East, a good 300 miles with all the Karoo in between, while the Government at the Castle had been immeasurably far away. That Government had been in their eyes something alien and even hostile. It taxed freeborn Afrikaners when it could and gave them very little in return. It tried to stop them trekking out beyond the Colonial borders which for long years it had never taken the trouble to define; it tried to prevent them shooting the game on which so many of them lived; it forbade them to have dealings with the tribes; and all the time it failed to enforce its proclamations. Long before the Company's day was done, the Boers

had decided that the business of a central government was to appoint suitable local officials, to supply the outlying districts with ammunition, and to defend the coasts of the Colony from invaders. For the rest it should leave men alone.

The Company had left the Boers alone till at the end of sixty years no one at the Castle could say for certain how far afield the pioneers had gone. At last in 1778 Governor van Plettenberg set out to see for himself.¹ He found that the frontiersmen in the farthest east had made contact with tribesmen of a new kind, the Bantu, Kaffirs, and that they desired a landdrost and a predikant. He promised them the officials they asked for, fixed the middle reaches of the Fish river as the dividing line between white and black, and returned to the Castle thoughtful.

There, next year, van Plettenberg heard that fighting had begun between Europeans and Bantu. It was the first so-called Kaffir war of a century of such wars.

Van Plettenberg's frontier tour was a turning point in the history of South Africa. Troubles nearer Cape Town delayed the despatch of the promised magistrate to Graaff-Reinet till 1786 and of the predikant till 1792; nevertheless, the Governor's coming marked the beginning of sixty crucial years, two generations of change in a society whose structure permitted of no change.

Between the date of Van Plettenberg's tour and the beginning of the Great Trek, the Cape Colony was subjected to five administrations: the Dutch East India Company *in extremis* (1778-95), the temporary and High Tory first British Occupation (1795-1803), the semi-revolutionary Batavian Republic (1803-6), the

¹ *Belangrijke Historische Dokumenten* (ed. G. M. Theal), vol. i.

second British Occupation in its earlier High Tory and 'mark-time' stage (1806-25), and finally the reforming British administration (1825-36). ✓

It was the policy of the last-named administration and bad times that brought the frontiersmen to the trekking point, but it would be wrong to suppose that the troubles that came to a head then had only begun in 1825 or even with the second coming of the British in 1806. All these troubles had shown their heads before ever the Company had departed, and the root cause of them was that the steady advance of the forces of regular government, which van Plettenberg's visit had heralded, paved the way for the coming of new social and economic forces. These forces bore slowly at first but steadily upon a stubborn folk who found it far more difficult than it had been to escape from unfamiliar influences by edging away a little farther into the wilds. For now the route eastward was more or less blocked by Bantu tribesmen advancing from the opposite direction. The Boers were held in front and pressed upon from behind. Then, in the final decade, the pressure of new things from behind became too much for them. Unable and unwilling to stand the strain, hundreds of them broke out through the north-eastern corner of the overcrowded Colony on to the High Veld. ✓

The kaleidoscopic succession of flags that flew at the Castle masked the essential unity of that period of sixty years. One after the other those governments pursued two ends, each taking up the venture where the other left off: the extension of the rule of law and a search for a *modus vivendi* with the tribes. One after the other they encountered the same difficulties from the tribesmen and from their own subjects.

The pastoralists desired to live the *lekker lewe*. Life

fell far short of that ideal for many, but even an approximation to it demanded at least three things: unlimited land for nothing or next to nothing, a sufficiency of the cheapest conceivable kind of labour, and security wherein each man might live in quietness on his own place far from his nearest neighbour.

Land, labour, security, a trinity inseparable in the eyes of Boers. During the first sixty years of European settlement at the southern end of Africa, the Company had tried to solve the problem by limiting the extent of the Colony. It had failed. For three-quarters of a century thereafter the dispersion of the pastoralists had gone on unchecked, and the result had been the creation of the trekboer. From 1778 onwards Government had returned to the old policy of setting limits to this over-rapid dispersion.

The official point of view has been recorded most clearly perhaps by Willem van Ryneveld, a Cape man and an official high in the service of the Company and of the first and second British administrations.¹ In the course of a discussion of the pros and cons of the abolition of the slave trade and even of slavery itself, he set out in one short page the chief social, political and economic weaknesses of the struggling Cape Colony, the story of the development of the trekboers, and some of the most general causes of the Great Trek of the future.

Slave labour at the centre and unlimited free land at the circumference, wrote van Ryneveld, were the curses of the Colony. They always had been and they always would be unless steps were taken to limit the one and thereby

¹ 'Replies to the Questions . . . proposed by H.E. the Earl of Macartney by W. S. Van Ryneveld, 29 November 1797' (*Journal of Secondary Education* (Transvaal), September and October 1931).

to end the other. There was nothing in the soil or the climate to forbid Europeans (he called them 'natives' in the fashion of the day to distinguish them from men born in old Europe) from doing the work that was done by peasants in Spain and Sicily and such-like lands. The only bar thereto was that custom was against it, necessity did not drive. How should it? Why should a young man work for a pittance in the corn-fields alongside slaves when he could marry, acquire some cattle, and get free grazing for them beyond the frontiers? So long as this trek, trek, trekking went on, how could the importation of slaves be ended, since corn must be grown by someone? How could peace be kept with the border tribes or even a solid front be maintained against them? How could the exiguous revenues of the Colony pay for the proper enforcement of the rule of law, let alone for the extension of religion, education and the things of civilisation to the frontier community?

So much for the official standpoint. What, now, of the Boers'? To get the full measure of that, imagine an Afrikaner born about 1780 and going out on the Great Trek in his middle fifties. There were many who did that; Louis Trigardt, first of the Voortrekkers, was one; Piet Retief, best known perhaps and certainly the ablest of the Trek leaders, was another. And then consider the changes that a man like that would have known from his own experience or the hearsay of his widely dispersed relatives and friends.

The first Kaffir war, an accentuation of the scuffling that is endemic on all such frontiers, had ended just before our Boer had been born. It had been conducted by the frontiersmen on their own account, there had been a large mob of captured cattle to be shared out at the end of it, and the Colonial line had been

carried up to the lower Fish river to include the Zuurveld where Grahamstown now stands.

Then a magistrate had come to Graaff-Reinet to see to it that no foreign power occupied Algoa Bay, to collect the annual recognition money from the cattle ranchers, and generally to enforce the well-tried policy of racial segregation: whites to the west of the Fish river, blacks to the east of it. All this without a single soldier to help him. Naturally he had failed, and when, yielding to local pressure, he had called out a burgher commando to drive the Kaffirs off the Zuurveld to the further side, the Kaffir side, of the Fish river, the Castle authorities had stopped the mobilisation and sent a secretary to keep a check upon him.

This secretary, Maynier, had speedily become a name of reproach to the frontier folk, and in time an evil tradition. The fellow had seemed to believe nonsense that some said came from France, about natural rights and liberty and equality for all men and not for Christian men only. He had tried to stop masters flogging their Hottentots without his leave, and how could they go all the way to Graaff-Reinet to get that? He would not allow anyone to go into Kaffirland in search of missing cattle without his leave once more, and then nothing stronger than a little field-cornet's party. Nor had the arrival of the long-promised predikant in 1792 mended matters. The good man would not confine himself to his clerical duties, and the Boers, like Lord Melbourne long afterwards, held that religion was excellent in its way, but not when it came to interfering in a man's private affairs.

Next year the Kaffirs had gone off with more cattle than usual and Maynier had ridden out against them with a commando. For a time he had had a considerable

measure of success, but the end of it all had been dispersal with the Bantu still entrenched on the Zuurveld, many of the local farmers seriously impoverished, and many more infuriated with a government that neither gave them security nor allowed them to take their own line. The upshot had been that, in the middle of 1795, Swellendamers and Graaff-Reineters had risen in rebellion. Loyal they might be to distant Holland, but not to this Company. They would pay it neither recognition money nor taxes; they proposed to recover cattle in their own way; they must have leave to select their own local officials; they would see to it that no one put false ideas, French or other, into the heads of their Hottentots.

In the midst of the turmoil had come the summons to hasten to the Cape Peninsula to repel the British invaders. Not a man had gone from Graaff-Reinet. What were the British or the Peninsula to them? But some Swellendamers had dutifully ridden off, and had presently come trooping back, hot, angry and dishevelled, with tidings that the Company's mercenaries had betrayed them, that the Company itself was gone, and that the redcoats were in possession of the Castle and the western districts. The Swellendamers had then submitted to the Colony's new rulers, and so had some of their Graaff-Reinet neighbours. But others had held out for terms. They would accept King George in place of the Company as protector and supplier of ammunition, for that was what a central government was for; they would receive back their expelled magistrate and undertake to obey 'reasonable laws'; but they must elect their own heemraden and have leave to go into Kaffirland after missing cattle.¹

¹ *Records of Cape Colony* (ed. G. M. Theal), i, 208, 480.

In the end, the Graaff-Reinet die-hards had given way, and the magistrate had come back with a handful of dragoons to support him, the first regular soldiers many of the frontiersmen had ever seen. For a year or two there had been peace, if it could be called peace while coloured banditti from the Orange river valley and Bushmen raided isolated sheep farms along the northern border, and, on the eastern frontier, stray Europeans pushed in and settled beyond the Fish river and the Kaffirs dug themselves in on the Zuurveld. For the rest, the new Government had acted with moderation. It had indeed defined the Colony's frontiers, repeated the old orders against intercourse with the tribes, and brought back the adventurers from beyond the Fish; but it had let go the pioneers northward of the Colonial line, since only Bushmen and banditti and desolation lay that way. That way also lay the Orange river drifts and the road to the High Veld.¹

Then in 1799 new troubles had come. Rumours had reached the frontiers that things were going badly with the British at Cape Town and elsewhere. At that stage a frontier worthy had been arrested for forgery. His friends had rescued him, made the usual demands for local liberty, and called upon all good burghers and a friendly Kaffir chieftain to come to their aid. None had come except a few British deserters and Boer ne'er-dowells from Kaffirland. But up had come the troops, British regulars and the Hottentot Corps inherited from the Company. The rebels had surrendered. Eighteen of them had been haled off to the Castle, where one of them had presently died and the rest had remained till the Batavian authorities released them in 1803.

¹ Vide P. J. van der Merwe, *Die Noordwarste Beweging van die Boers voor die Groot Trek, 1770-1842* (Pretoria, 1937).

Meanwhile the rebellion, the call for Kaffir aid, and the coming of the troops, white and brown, had set the eastern frontier lands in an uproar. Bantu clans had fallen foul of each other and of the soldiers; Hottentot servants, landless and depressed, had broken away and armed themselves as best they could. After much mutual cattle-rieving, peace of a kind—and Maynier—had descended upon the frontier once more.

Maynier had utilised this lucid interval to decree that Hottentot servants must be registered before an official and treated better by their employers. Others had flouted the colour bar in the very House of God. Not content with using the church at Graaff-Reinet, the one substantial building of any size within 300 miles, as a barracks for the Imperial troops, they had used it as a place of worship for slaves and Hottentots. So the shouting and trampling had begun all over again; nor had it ended till a peace of exhaustion had come just in time to enable the British to hand over a nominally tranquil Colony to the Batavian officials.

Such would be the chief political memories of our Boer in 1803, a married man of twenty-three now with perhaps two or three children. The three great frontier interests of land, labour and security had been agitated and fought over during all those years. The one certain outcome was that the hold of the central government on the frontier districts had tightened. There were troops at Graaff-Reinet and, since the recent troubles, at Fort Frederick on Algoa Bay as well, and the fate of the rebels of 1799 proved that the British did not treat rebellion lightly. Now came the Batavian officials to the frontiers to confirm all that their predecessors had done, to soothe their bewildered subjects, and to station a magistrate at Uitenhage to control the south-eastern

section of the Colony. On their return to Cape Town they posted another at Tulbagh at the other end of the Colony to relieve the Stellenbosch magistrate of the hopeless task of ruling the far-distant Roggeveld, Bokkeveld and Hantam.

The Batavians went and the British came again. They kept a considerable force on the eastern frontier, despatched more magistrates to the frontier districts, and from 1811 onwards sent out judges of the High Court, *missi dominici* going two by two round the whole Colony twice yearly. Thus did the central government become more of a reality in the outlying parts than ever before.

After 1815 there could be no doubt about it. For then a burgher on the extreme frontier, who had been summoned to answer for the alleged ill-treatment of a Hottentot, defied magistrate and circuit court judges for the space of two years. At last a white officer and Hottentot soldiers were sent to arrest him. He fired on them repeatedly and was himself shot down. His friends tried to raise the countryside and called upon a leading Kaffir chief and his men. Very few joined them. The Kaffirs did not move. Rather did their neighbours turn out to assist the troops, and soon the little band of rebels was rounded up, not without bloodshed. After a prolonged trial some thirty were banished to less dangerous parts of the frontier and five of the ring-leaders were hanged publicly. The hanging of the Slachter's Nek rebels shocked the frontier profoundly, but thereafter there were no more revolts. A government that hanged white men was not to be trifled with.

But our Boer and his fellows judged the Government not so much by its conduct in a crisis as by its attitude towards the day-to-day issues of land and labour and security. For the first twenty years or so of the Second

British Occupation the policy of the Government was in many ways such as frontiersmen could approve.

First, the land. For a few years after the occupation the British set their faces against any expansion other than the slow drift of the sheep and cattle men north and north-eastward. But in 1812 the Governor, Sir John Cradock, took strong action against the Kaffirs to the east. With a large force of troops and burghers he swept the tribes out of the Zuurveld back behind the line of the Fish river. Here was more land at last, and none too soon. Already men far back from the actual frontier were complaining that they were overcrowded.

So far, so good. What followed was not so good in frontier eyes. Stout Sir John, being minded to achieve closer and more stable settlement than heretofore, announced that there was to be an end of the old easy loan-place grants. Farms on the Zuurveld were to be only two-thirds of the accustomed size. These, and grants of Crown lands elsewhere of the usual 6000 acres, were to be held at quit-rents that would vary in amount with the locality, the quality of the land, and so on. What was our Boer, a mature man of thirty-three with his eldest son already in his 'teens, to make of such a departure from the old ways?

The Zuurveld Boers gave their answer soon enough. The Zuurveld land, they grumbled, was sour, Kaffirs were still a nuisance, Hottentot labourers were not as plentiful as they should be. Things were better, they had heard, in the north-east. One by one they edged away in that direction.

Their places on the Zuurveld, henceforward to be called Albany, were taken by British settlers. Some thousands of these came in 1820, and if only hundreds made good on their farms, their mere presence meant

that the southern end of the eastern frontier was hopelessly crowded according to Boer standards. A year or two later, Government allowed the Boers to plant themselves along the banks of the Koonap river beyond the Fish. But that did not check the drift north-eastward. Rather was Government obliged to carry its frontier in those parts up to the fords that led across the middle Orange river into Griqua Philippolis.

Thus by 1825 the pressure on the land had been eased somewhat. But land was no use to those who would live the *lekker lewe* without adequate supplies of labour. There were slaves in the pastoral districts, but not many; the farther from Cape Town the fewer the slaves. There were also Bushman servants here and there along the northern border, but, throughout, Hottentots formed the bulk of the labour force.

The Hottentots had fallen between two stools. Government regarded them as tribesmen, and as such subject to few of the restraints and still fewer of the safeguards of colonial law; but whereas their tribal system and lands had passed from them and they had not made good the right to hold land in severalty, they were obliged to serve white lords for their keep and a pittance. Maynier had begun to take this problem of the Hottentots in hand in the year of the French Revolution. His efforts had been seconded by the Evangelical missionaries who had arrived during the next decade, Moravians first and then men of the new London Missionary Society.

For a time the authorities had looked with suspicion on the missionaries, but gradually they had given them their confidence. Above all they had realised that the root of the trouble was the Hottentots' lack of land. During the confused fighting that marked the end of their first brief period of rule, fighting in which Hotten-

tots took a vigorous part, the British had allowed a London Missionary Society missionary to gather some of them together on a temporary reserve. The Batavians had transformed this into a permanent reserve at Bethelsdorp, near their new magistracy of Uitenhage, and had given small reserves to one or two Hottentot chiefs. Further, they had set their seal on Maynier's policy by decreeing that no Hottentot might be taken as a servant except under a contract drawn up by a local official. The British, after their second coming, cautiously multiplied the number of mission reserves.

Imperfect though this policy was, it eased the situation from one point of view. The Hottentots ceased to be a danger. Some of them at least could live in the reserves, and still more found in them a vantage ground from which they could bargain with prospective employers. But the policy was intensely unpopular among the frontier Europeans. All this business of contracts was a gross interference with the affairs of a man's household. Worse still, they held that the mission reserves drained off their labour supply, collected all the coloured wastrels in the neighbourhood, and infected their inmates with unseemly ideas. The Evangelical missionaries stood for a colour-blind liberty and equality that went dead against the Boers' instincts, traditions and inclinations; their very presence was an implicit criticism of the frontier scheme of things.

Criticism was all too explicit on the part of some of the London Missionary Society men. In 1812 members of that Society arraigned numbers of farmers and their wives before the new Circuit Court to answer charges of cruelty and hard dealing with Hottentot servants. Some of the accusations were proved to be false, for the missionaries had been credulous; others were de-

clared non-proven or were withdrawn since witnesses were dead, absent, or averse to speaking. But some were proved and the delinquents were punished, and in all cases the judges had listened gravely to the evidence of Hottentots and strangers against Christian men and women. That circuit lived in frontier memories as the Black Circuit.

Meanwhile the British had abolished the slave trade in 1807 and had thus sent up the price of slaves. What is more, they had issued orders for the milder treatment of slaves by their masters and thereby meddled once more in the domestic concerns of a people who boasted, with much truth, that their form of slavery was milder than in other parts of the world.

But all this hit the older-established West with its multitudinous and heavily mortgaged slaves harder than the newer pastoral East. The East's chief concern was with the Hottentots, and on that score the Government proved itself not unsympathetic. After all, a masterless, workless, landless man was an offence to Tory officials whether his skin were brown in South Africa or white in England.

A series of proclamations issued between 1809 and 1819 brought the Hottentots under Colonial law. On the one hand, they were given protection in that the rules governing labour contracts were stiffened, and the Circuit judges were specially instructed to give careful heed to their complaints. On the other hand, their liberty was taken away. They were ordered to find fixed abodes and forbidden to leave one district for another without a pass from the magistrate. Hottentot children, maintained by the employer of their parents until they should be eight years old, were to be apprenticed to him for the next ten years, while orphans were also to

be apprenticed to suitable masters by the magistrates, like the little *Oliver Twists* of the Old Country. In short, all those Hottentots who could not find their way to a mission reserve, enlist in the Cape Corps or get away to join the banditti in the Orange river valley, were left to work as pass-bound serfs on such terms as a farmer field-cornet might approve or an isolated magistrate allow.

✓ There remained the third and last problem of security. The frontiersmen of 1778 had petitioned for a magistrate and a minister because they had felt themselves insecure in this world and uncertain of their destiny in the next. The turmoil that had followed the appointment of these officials and others like them at the turn of the century had been due in great measure to the failure of the distant Government at the Castle to give full security to its subjects, and its refusal to allow them to seek it in their own fashion. Gradually, however, matters had begun to mend. The British had sent a few troops to the eastern frontier. The Batavians had appointed additional magistrates, defined the powers, military, political and judicial, of the all-important field-cornets, and brought the commando system up to date. The British again had increased the garrison along the Kaffir frontier, appointed still more magistrates, and backed them up with justices itinerant. ✓

Full use was made of the reformed commando system during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Expeditions against the Bushmen became annual events at one point or another along the northern border, as the pastoralists headed for the Orange river drifts. On the eastern frontier, after commandos and troops together had swept the Kaffirs off the Zuurveld in 1812, military posts had been set up along the line of the Fish river

controlled from local headquarters at the new villages of Cradock and Grahamstown. Then, in 1819, Kaffirs came over the frontier. They were thrust back. The counter-invasion of Kaffirland yielded good returns in captured cattle, and the Governor arranged with a leading chief that nearly all the land eastward of the lower Fish as far as the Keiskamma river should be neutral territory, empty of men both black and white. Next year the 1820 British settlers came to strengthen this buffer frontier, and presently Boers were allowed to go into the Neutral—or was it the Ceded Territory?—as far as the Koonap river. What though Kaffirs also began to seep back into the Territory farther south? They were not numerous, and patrols of burghers and soldiers were readily allowed to go into Kaffirland in search of missing cattle and, more or less in keeping with Bantu custom, to take Kaffir cattle if they could not find their own beasts.

Such was the situation in 1825, nearly half a century after Van Plettenberg's famous journey and ten years before the Great Trek. The Colony was not quite what our Boer had known in his young days. As a man of forty-five with grown-up sons and daughters and more than one little grandchild, he would at times be anxious about their future. Still, even though land was not so easy to come by as it once had been and quit-rents were an offence, there was no cause yet for alarm, and there was no denying that there was much more security than there used to be and a fairly constant supply of the accustomed labour. The distant Governor at the Castle seemed to be a sensible man for a *rooinek*; the Scottish captain at the military post hard by was, taking him all in all, an understanding fellow; authority for day-to-day purposes still lay with the local officials, with our Boer

and his fellow field-cornets, with his cousin and nephew, both heemraden of the district, and with his wife's aunt's husband, the landdrost. It might all have been worse.

And then it became worse, much worse, suddenly. The Imperial Government, no longer so Tory nor so cautious as hitherto, took the Cape Colony in hand. It called upon the colonists to accept sweeping changes in all departments of their lives. The Westerners, who had always lived in comparatively close touch with the outer world, found the strain of adaptation very great; many of the isolated Easterners found it impossible. They were first harassed and finally overwhelmed by changes that came upon them in massed formation and at speed, at a time when a run of bad seasons and a growing land shortage were exercising the minds of substantial burghers for the sake of their sons, and were making 'poor whites' of less established men.

Some of the Government's reforms concerned the pastoralists little. They had always done much of their business by barter and were not seriously burdened with mortgages; hence it mattered less to them than to the Westerners that the paper rix-dollar should be fixed at rs. 6d. in silver instead of the nominal 4s. The new liberty of the press again was a cause of satisfaction in so far as newspapers came to supplement the field-cornet's well-thumbed copy of the *Government Gazette*. It was only a source of grievance when John Fairbairn's *Commercial Advertiser* and, much more rarely, Cristoffel Brand's *Zuid Afrikaan* or Louis Meurant's *Grahamstown Journal* saw fit to animadvert on them and their ways.

Some Boers might feel resentful that the old Council of Justice and the Burgher Senate at Cape Town, the nearest approach to a popular town council the Colony had ever known, had both been swept away. All that

was far distant, and touched them hardly at all except when one of the new professional judges, an Englishman or a Scot, came round on circuit in his red robe. It signified little to them that burghers were now being nominated to the Governor's new Legislative Council. All the nominees were Westerners, and only the Grahamstown English seemed to be angry at that. Nor did it grieve those of them who heard about it that the imperial authorities had refused to countenance an elected legislature. The demand for that had come from the men of the capital and the western farm-lands with sporadic help from the Albany settlers.

It was the changes in local administration that really came home to the frontiersmen. The familiar and impressionable landdrosts and sturdy local heemraden made way for resident magistrates and civil commissioners, many of them strangers from overseas. Moreover, English was made the language of the courts. It was bad enough at any time to have to do with lawyers and their bits of paper that entrapped a man without having the proceedings carried on in speech that few Boers understood properly, even though they were assured that the civil law was still the accustomed Roman-Dutch. Nor did ignorance of English exempt a man from service on the jury which had come in as part of the new-fangled English criminal procedure.

All these changes in the framework of government were baffling and irritating to a suspicious people deeply embedded in the old ways; but what brought matters to a head was the policy of this new government in the intimate matters of land, labour and security.

The land question entered upon one of its acute stages in the early 'thirties. Drought followed drought, each worse than the last, so that burghers on the one

side of the Fish river and Kaffirs on the other became restive, and farmers on the edges of the Karoo trekked because their water supply had given out. At intervals locusts came to the parts around Graaff-Reinet, great swarms of *voetgangers* like landslides slowly sweeping everything away. Soon the backveld was full of complaints about the quit-rent system, complaints of official favouritism in the allocation of farms, complaints that designing men were contracting for rents too low, while the simple were being saddled with rents too high. On all sides, but above all in the new and ill-organised north-eastern districts, men grumbled that they had paid their survey fees long ago and yet the Lands Office in Cape Town had never sent them their deeds. Rumour had it that a fresh survey was to be taken and fresh fees charged.

✓ For five or six years past no fresh land had been taken into the Colony. True, in 1829 and again in 1831, Government had acquired land in the Ceded Territory along the Kat river; but it had established a Hottentot settlement under missionary control in one part of it, and would only allow British or Hottentots to occupy the rest. These folk lived close together and would present a stronger barrier to the tribes than Boers who felt crowded at anything more than one family to three miles of frontier. Nevertheless, the eastern Boers naturally took the decree as a snub, and, to make matters worse, their countrymen in the north-east sustained a similar check.

For some time past men had been allowed to go in search of pasture beyond the Orange river into Adam Kok's Philippolis. Some of them went even farther north into the Basuto borderlands. There, in the Griqua and Basuto country, their flocks increased so fast that their farms could not carry them when they came back

to the Colony, as they were bound to come once a year to report. Moreover, hunters told of still finer land clear of natives far beyond the Griqua territory. Landless men, whose numbers were increasing ominously, asked leave to go in and settle there. The harassed Governor refused. How could he let them go? Revenue was failing, Downing Street was talking of an economy campaign, and there were neither troops nor magistrates to spare for new territory so far afield. All of which made little impression on Boers, who saw only that landless Afrikanders had been refused leave to take land that was to be had for the taking.

In that same year of 1832 a further and unutterable woe was threatened. In future, men learned, Crown lands were to be auctioned. In face of such a horror quit-rents became almost attractive. Were free-born Afrikanders to pay good money for land which was their birthright? Never. Soon men were established in Philippolis with no intention of going south behind the river again, others were trekking into the unannexed wastes that lay between the Stormberg mountains and the Orange, while one considerable group went eastward right into the heart of Kaffirland beyond the Kei river. Chief of this party was Louis Trigardt.

The frontiers were cracking under the combined pressure of drought, teeming families, threatened auction of Crown lands, and the knowledge that there was better land and plenty of it farther afield. The Government's handling of the labour question redoubled the pressure.

In 1828 Ordinance 50 swept away all the Hottentot pass laws. Dr. John Philip, superintendent of the far-flung lines of London Missionary Society stations and champion of the mixed-breed Griquas, was popularly

supposed to be behind this revolution, but those who should know best said that the acting-Governor and, of all people, Andries Stockenstrom had had far more to do with it. What could Stockenstrom be thinking of, son of a man who had been killed by Kaffirs, leader of commandos, for many years magistrate at Graaff-Reinet, and at the moment Superintendent-General of the Eastern Province, to father an ordinance that gave all free persons of colour liberty to move about in search of higher wages, permission to hold land if they could get it, and the right to abstain from work if they could live without doing any?

At once the cry went up throughout the Colony, in English as well as in Afrikaans, that the Hottentots were become lazy and insolent, vagrant and thievish, and that wages were soaring. Gradually, however, as most of the delinquents returned to the scenes of their former labours, the uproar dwindled to a murmur. And then came tidings that the Emancipation Act was through.

That news was not unexpected, though none the more welcome on that account. Government had been tinkering with the domestic institution for some time past. It had forbidden the 1820 settlers and, later on, those along the Koonap river to keep slaves, and had poured forth proclamations designed to ameliorate the lot of the slaves at such a rate that slave-owning had become a weariness and vexation. These things had pressed so heavily upon the West, where eighty-four per cent. of the slaves dwelt, that in 1832 a number of farmers, not far from the capital itself, had fingered their guns significantly. News of that had travelled round the platteland and had lost nothing as it travelled.

However, here was finality at last. In a year's time, in December 1834, the slaves would become mere

, apprentices to their former owners, who would of course be compensated. Four years thereafter, in December 1838, the slave-apprentices would become free even as these Hottentots. It was all wrong in Boer eyes, wrong too in the eyes of many who were not Boers. Something must be done to get these people under control and save the economic and social foundations of the Colony.

Pressure was brought to bear from all parts on the acting-Governor. Early in 1834 he promised that steps would be taken to check vagrancy and ensure an adequate supply of labour. Sir Benjamin D'Urban, who arrived presently as Governor, boggled over the draft ordinance, but the new Legislative Council passed it by a majority and sent it home, as it was bound to do, for ratification. All seemed to be going well, and field-cornets were beginning to hale passless Hottentots to the nearest magistracy, when Downing Street disallowed an ordinance which was in direct conflict with Ordinance 50, and the Governor promptly dismissed one or two of the over-zealous field-cornets.

The rejection of the proposed vagrancy law linked up the problem of labour with the ever-present problem of security. The borderlands were full of *rondswervende* folk of all shades of colour, a possible danger, at the least an embarrassment to the isolated Boers. Sober farmers in the wide north-eastern districts complained that there was not enough government. The authorities left everyone to his own devices and thus bred in many the desire to rove and commit 'irregularities and oppression'. The law forbade anyone to cross the borders without leave; it had always done so. All the more reason then for enforcing it, especially against traders who bartered illicit gunpowder with Griquas and others beyond the borders who often paid

for it in cattle and sheep lifted from Colonial ranches. As for such officials-as there were, men grumbled that some of the field-cornets were sheer bunglers, especially in the matter of official correspondence, and that there were not nearly enough magistrates. What could the best of magistrates do to reconcile neighbours, to keep order, to maintain 'proper relations between master and servant', in a district of 11,000 square miles with less than one living soul to the square mile?

Look at it from the other side. It was hard for well-disposed burghers to keep the law. Must a master travel 200 or 300 miles, leaving his house and his family and his stock unguarded, to lodge a complaint against an erring servant at the nearest magistrate's office? Yet if he did not, he must either let punishment go by default and maybe have to put up with a long curtain lecture as a consequence, or take the law into his own hands and risk being summoned to court as defendant instead of plaintiff. That had already happened to farmers and sometimes their wives also. Acquittal was small recompense for the fatigues of the journey and the annoyance and indignity of having to appear at the instance of disgruntled Hottentots. Conviction was shame unspeakable and expensive withal.

Threats to the public tranquillity that sprang up within the Colony were made worse by the insecurity that came from without. For a long time the recovery of missing cattle from Kaffirland had not been difficult. There had been losses, but the colonists had not lost on the exchange. But from 1826 onwards, Government had decided that the old free-and-easy system of patrols had led to grave abuses. It had stiffened the rules of the game. First, it had forbidden patrols to ride in unless the lifted cattle were actually within sight, an unlikely

thing on the bushy Fish river boundary; then it had allowed them to recover their own beasts but not to take Kaffir cattle in lieu thereof. Now it seemed to be undecided about the whole system of commandos, even hostile to it.

The commando system was in good working order on the Kaffir frontier, but it had grown slack on the northern Bushman line for lack of work to do. Yet when the Governor had tightened it up there, he had had his knuckles rapped. The Imperial Government, safe in the heart of London 6000 miles away, had cancelled his ordinance and had sent out a new man, D'Urban, who was said to have instructions to stop reprisals by patrols and to find a *modus vivendi* with the tribes which should render the commando, that 'fearful scourge', unnecessary.

They and their commandos were a scourge, were they? That was another weight added to the burden of 'unjustifiable odium' that had been piled upon them these many years by folk more fortunately placed than themselves. It was galling to those of the frontiersmen who heard of it that Tory officials at the Castle, lumping all Cape Colonists together, should aver that there was no class fit nor numerous enough to man an elected legislature. What infuriated all of them was the knowledge that officials and visitors, Dutch, English, Scottish, German, French, nay, the very western Cape Colonists themselves, should hold a low opinion of them and make no secret of it. It was an attitude which had persisted from the time of Governor van Plettenberg's half-forgotten journey long ago. At first it had taken the form of fears that they might be sinking to the level of Hottentots, becoming at length 'like those wild nations'; later on there had been statements that some

of them were indeed 'half wild Europeans' suffering from 'a complete corruption of their moral sense . . . almost sunk to the level of savages'.¹ Now, in these latter days, the *Commercial Advertiser* was pontificating about 'the solitary Boer' and his 'dutiful adherence to the habits of his infancy', Dr. Philip in London had written little that was good of any frontiersmen, Afrikaner or British, in his recently published *Researches*, and philanthropists in the House of Commons itself were speaking in the same breath of 'boers and the most degraded of the English'.²

Throughout 1834 the word went round the frontier districts that it was time to trek and get away from all this. In a land of their own men might hope 'to be left to themselves, to live in quiet, free, and to be exempt from taxation'.³

Why not? It was not as if the interior were absolutely unknown. Hunters, traders, missionaries, trekboers and reprobates had already gone beyond the Orange, beyond the Vaal, as far as the Limpopo river itself. Eastward a road ran through Kaffirland well-trodden by Wesleyan missionaries and English ivory traders from Port Natal. There was good reason to believe that vast tracts of land in the north and in Natal had been swept clear of native inhabitants by the ferocious Mantatis, Matabele and Zulus.

The Boers knew how to trek. Some of them were trekboers living in their waggons, others were used to trekking once a year from one farm to another. The rest

¹ C. Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte*, p. 12; 'Replies . . . by W. S. Van Ryneveld', *vide* p. 68, note 1; J. De Mist, *op. cit.*, p. 198; H. Lichtenstein, *op. cit.*, 448, 454; ii, 65; J. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 219; J. Howison, *op. cit.*, i, 356.

² Quoted by A. Steedman, *op. cit.*, ii, 66; J. Philip, *Researches in South Africa*, *The Spectator*, 17 May 1834; Hansard, 3rd Series, vol. xxiv, 1061.

³ J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i, 516.

could face it if they must. Already there were men living beyond the borders on all hands, and some of those who still dwelt within the line in the wild northern areas had lived so long in isolation that it was hard to say whether they belonged to the Colony or not. It would be no great matter for such as these to cut the painter altogether. Even in the more established parts of the platteland, the folk were migratory, the *wanderlust* was in their bones. Comparatively few lived in the houses their fathers had built, not many in those in which they themselves had started married life. They were South Africans. Any place in southern Africa where there was good grazing and water would suit them, and from all accounts the land beyond the frontier was better than that within it.

Nevertheless the matter would have to be ripely considered and duly weighed. Landless men and younger sons would, of course, better themselves by trekking. A trek on a big scale, too, would be good fun for the young fellows, a glorified and perpetual picnic. But it was one thing for men to trek thus, and even they would weary of it after a while. To trek with women and children was another matter altogether. It was not so much that family men feared the dangers of a trek on which they would travel in strength. It was that prolonged trekking would come hard on their wives and little ones, and that the mere idea of parting with the home and the bits of things that would have to be left behind would shock their women-folk.

But on broaching the project many Boers found their wives ready and eager to trek. More limited in their interests even than themselves, more vehement, more personal in their ideas and values, it was they who felt and resented most keenly the social revolution that

Hottentot equality and slave emancipation were bringing to pass. Their household arrangements were upset. Already Hottentot servants were flitting from one mistress to another, and soon the slaves would be free to flit too; it was harder to control them than it had been. Mantati refugees in the north and stray Fingos in the east did not fill all the gaps and were more incompetent even than Hottentots. Besides, were these coloured folk to compete with their sons for land, to stand on an equality with them before the law? It was an outrage to that sense of racial superiority which was naturally stronger in the bearers of children than in the mere begetters of them. Ungodly, that was what it was; 'contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke'.¹ Rather than that, leave the Colony for a land somewhere, anywhere, in which Afrikaners could preserve their doctrine of the colour bar in all its purity. Nay, some of them were convinced that it was God's will that they should trek. So it was that many a wife made up her husband's mind for him, or at least made up her own mind to trek before he had quite made up his.

There were leading men in the frontier lands who worked upon this smouldering discontent, notably Gerrit Maritz and Piet Retief.² Maritz was the leading waggon-maker at Graaff-Reinet, passably educated and well furnished with this world's goods as these things went in the eastern districts.³ He was in his middle thirties, a fine big man, well knit and upstanding,

¹ J. Bird, *op. cit.*, i, 459.

² J. Bird, *Narrative of W. J. Pretorius, op. cit.*, i, 230 ff.

³ G. S. Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 100, and *Voortrekkerense*, i, 263; iii, 143.

a pillar of the Church with great scorn for Doppers, rather a jolly fellow who loved a laugh and a good story whether to hear or to tell. Something of a dandy too, well calculated to impress the ladies with his furry top-hat, clean-shaven upper lip and dark tawny beard, hair trimmed shorter than most of his neighbours, and coat and trousers fashionably long—no gap between *his* coat and trouser tops! Everyone for miles around knew him and his gay light-blue waggon with its smartly curved canvas tent. But he was a masterful man (all the Maritzes were that), overbearing some said, certainly impatient of opposition. And he had ambition for which he could find no outlet in his business and the local *kerkraad*. He was not a fighting man, therefore a field-cornetcy or commandantship was not for him; in the civil sphere there was no longer a *heemraad* board for him to find a place on. But beyond the frontiers in an independent republic there would be that and, who knows, much more.

Retief, presently of the Winterberg, had little of Maritz's *bonhomie* and polish, but he was a far bigger man and had a more varied experience of the world than any man born and bred in the frontier districts could hope to have.¹ That and his strength of character brought him to the front wherever he went, and in due time made of him the leader who came nearest to directing the fissiparous energies of the Trekkers to one end.

Retief was a man of the old Western Province. He came of good Huguenot stock; his forbears, wine and fruit farmers, had been rooted for generations at Stellenbosch. He himself had been born near by, and had been given the best education that was available to a country

¹ G. S. Preller, *Retief*, and *Voortrekker-mense*, i, 262.

lad in those days. He had then lived for four or five years in Cape Town, learning something of town life and acquiring useful business experience.

Retief's sturdy frame and piercing dark eyes revealed his restless energy. He was destined never to remain for long in any one place. He had come to the capital to escape from the monotony of life on a wine farm; presently he escaped from Cape Town and, for eight years or so, journeyed back and forth on his employer's business throughout the length and breadth of the Colony, getting a good general idea of it and of its varied peoples. It was not until 1814, when he was thirty-four years old, that he married an Eastern Province widow and settled on a farm near where the village of Riebeeck East now stands.

Not for long, however. Retief soon moved in to Grahamstown, the rising frontier capital, and thanks to a large share in the contract for carrying rations to the newly arrived 1820 Settlers, became one of the wealthiest men in Albany and commandant of the district burgher levy. Then disaster came upon him. He contracted to build the magistrate's offices at Grahamstown, and what with one thing and another was bankrupted. That was in 1824, a year before the wave of political and social reform swept down upon his Colony. He retired to the Winterberg at the northern end of the Kaffir frontier, and there he remained for ten long years while the political and social revolution took its course.

By 1834 Retief's resentment was full-blown. True, he had found his feet again, and was field-commandant of the Winterberg; but he was fifty-four, getting on in years, his dark brown hair and beard were shot with grey, perhaps he was bored, certainly he was worried at the general course of events. It is safe to assume that

he made no secret of his anxieties as he rode round among his neighbours in his round felt hat, short black jacket and light-coloured trousers, with never a weapon on his person, pleasant, friendly, tactful, explanatory, but with a gleam in his eye that was a warning to the wary.

Maritz and Retief must have found many of their way of thinking. At all events they had the satisfaction of seeing three exploring parties ride out secretly in the middle months of 1834, one north-west, one north, the third due east. If the reports of these *kommissie trekke* were favourable, there would be a trek from the Colony on a large scale. Better that than risking a rebellion. Remember Slachter's Nek.

The *kommissie trekke* were due to report about the New Year of 1835. Had they reported in time of peace, the Great Trek that followed would, humanly speaking, have been smaller than it actually was, and less bitter in spirit against the Colonial government and the Imperial government that stood behind it. As it was they came back to find the Colony engaged in repelling a Kaffir invasion. Nor was the final and disappointing peace settlement effected till the close of 1836. During those two troubled years, 1835-36, all the old grievances about land and labour and security became more acute, and to them were added new grievances: war losses, the revelation of the financial loss that lay behind the promised slave compensation, and further floods of 'unjustifiable odium'. It was out of the smoke of burning homesteads and blazing kraals, the stink of gunpowder and blood, the ruin of hopes and the frustration of revenge that the Trekkers went out party by party on to the High Veld.

Everything came together with a rush at the end of

1834 while the *kommissie trekke* were still away on their more or less lawful occasions. First, Dr. Philip appeared on the eastern frontier colloquing with Kaffir chiefs, and Heaven alone knew what he might be saying to them. Then, on the appointed day, the slaves, 39,000 of them, became apprentices to their ex-masters. A few days later the news spread that the Governor had made a treaty with a Griqua chieftain, Andries Waterboer, who, in return for a subsidy and some guns so dangerous in Griqua hands, was to keep order among men of all shades of colour in his stretch of the Orange river valley out to the west of Adam Kok's Philippolis. Finally, just before Christmas, 12,000 Kaffir warriors swept into the Colony on a wide front from the Winterberg to the sea.

The Kaffirs were thrust back by the united efforts of troops, commandos and Hottentots, but not before they had killed 100 white men and coloured men, burned 450 homesteads, and carried off great troops of horses, cattle and sheep. The Colonial forces took full vengeance on warriors and kraals, gardens and herds, and pushed eastwards to the line of the Kei river. Sir Benjamin D'Urban then annexed the country thus traversed under the style of the Province of Queen Adelaide, and sent the commandos home with the promise that the hostile tribes should be expelled therefrom to make way for other occupants.

Here was good news to take home, the prospect of more land, good land. But missionaries and Cape Town philanthropists cried out against this annexation of tribal lands, and the Kaffirs refused obstinately to be 'exterminated'. They even raided the Colony behind the Governor's back. So out the burghers must come once more at their own expense, to face hardship and de-

privation, to develop fresh points of friction with the regulars whose ways were not their ways nor their expressed thoughts on Boer tactics and discipline in any way printable, to see their waggons knocked to pieces and the captured cattle slaughtered troop by troop for rations. And, at the end of it all, the Governor had to agree that the hostile tribes should remain in Queen Adelaide provided they promised to be good subjects of King William. Home the burghers trooped once more, many of them on foot since their horses were dead, labouring under the weight of their great guns.

There was, it is true, still to be some new land as part compensation for the losses and fatigues of the long campaign, land in what was left of the old Ceded Territory, in Queen Adelaide itself and in the Stormberg area farther north which already contained some Boers. At once requests for farms poured in. But prospects of land in these annexed territories paled before the visions of the wonderful new lands beyond the frontiers conjured up by two out of the three *kommissie*. The party that had journeyed north-westward through desperate country into scarcely less desperate Damaraland had to confess that there was no outlet that way. But the second party had pushed north across the mixed karoo and grass-lands of Griqua Philippolis on to splendid grass-lands open and rolling all the way to the Zoutpansberg far beyond Vaal river. As for Piet Uys and his friends who had gone east through Kaffirland to Natal, they admitted that the road was cut across by many rivers and beset by natives, but Natal itself—*Alle wereld!* Where would men find a country like that in all Africa? ¹

The Kaffir war had delayed the Great Trek. Men

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, i, 269 ff.

like Field-Commandant Retief had been too busy leading their burghers to think about it, and even now that the actual fighting was over, trekking on a large scale would be impossible so long as martial law lay heavy on the frontier districts. Nevertheless, in the November of 1835, parties of would-be Trekkers were moving about uneasily just within the north-eastern frontier, and two small groups had actually set out: the first, consisting of Louis Trigardt and his friends from the Kaffir country, the second led by one, Janse van Rensburg, from the far north-eastern confines of the Colony. The Great Trek had begun.

The movement gathered strength as the year 1836 wore on. Everything conspired to set the Boers on the move. War-worn burghers were dismayed to find that they could not claim from the commissariat such surviving beasts as they could 'recognise' in good old frontier fashion. They must buy them at auction from a government which, in the heat of the conflict, had withdrawn hawkers' licences to sell gunpowder, and was now slow to pay up on military requisition notes and firmly resolved not to hear of such novel proposals as compensation for war losses, delay in the payment of taxes, or a reduction of the amount of taxes due. Many men were too short of cash to buy cattle even with two months' credit.

At the same moment news came that the eagerly awaited slave compensation would be paid out, not in the Colony, but in London. And hard on the heels of that report came rumours that Queen Adelaide Province was to be given back to the tribes. It was now that Andries Hendrik Potgieter and Sarel Cilliers led out the first considerable treks from the Colony.

Soon there was no doubt about it. Queen Adelaide

was to be abandoned and the Boers were to be recalled from the Stormberg lands. Further, rumour had it that Stockenstrom had been saying things tartly against Boers and English settlers before a committee of the Commons, that Philip also had gone with a Pentecostal following of Africans to London where he would doubtless say more, and that the Secretary of State had practically censured Sir Benjamin for his war and his peace and had singled out the colonial reprisal system as the ultimate cause of the whole trouble.

- To be blamed for a war in which the Kaffirs after all had been the invaders was like saltpetre in a wound. Hostile criticism, 'unjustifiable odium', had always been galling to the emotional Boers, and this time it was being poured out upon them by a distant government that was spurred on 'by interested and dishonest persons, under the cloak of religion, which testimony is believed in England to the exclusion of all evidence in our favour'. What could be expected from that but 'the total ruin of the country'?¹ Or were the authorities, D'Urban alone excepted, doing it for the purpose so that all the Afrikaners should be driven out of the Colony and only the British and Hottentots remain?² If so there were Boers ready to take the hint. In August 1836 Gerrit Maritz and a large party of Graaff-Reineters set off.

As Maritz moved out of the Colony at one end, Stockenstrom entered it at the other. He came as Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Province. His coming at first perturbed the Grahamstown men more

¹ Retief's Manifesto, *Grahamstown Journal*, 2 February 1837; G. W. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents* . . ., p. 143.

² *D'Urban MSS. re Trek* (typescript copies in S.A. Public Library, Cape Town), p. 115.

than the Boers, who were inclined to hope that he, an Afrikander, would give them something of the kind of government they desired, and to believe that his unpopularity with the British settlers was due to the fact that he was an Afrikander. There was need for strong government of some sort. The troops were doing their best, but they could not keep complete order nor entirely check stock-thieving in war-wasted territory full of men trekking or preparing to trek, full of Coloured folk wandering about unchecked by a vagrancy law, and full also of Bantu. Some of these Bantu were refugees brought into the Colony by the Governor, but some had come at the invitation of farmers eager for cheap labour, and others at their own invitation. A good many of them were armed with guns, of the gas-pipe trade variety it is true, but nevertheless guns. ✓

Stockenström speedily disillusioned the Boers.¹ They wanted security on their own terms; he promised them merely strict justice as between man and man regardless of colour and culture. He kept a tight hand on reprisals for missing cattle and would not hear of a vagrancy law other than that which the Governor had imposed recently on 'foreign' Kaffirs coming into the Colony from outside. What was the use of that, frontiersmen asked in both languages, all the more that the punishments meted out by the magistrates to coloured and native thieves and vagabonds were useless? The wretches, they averred, positively enjoyed the regular meals and shelter of the gaols and soon forgot lashes. In short, there was no hope of happiness for white farmers in so distressful a country, nor for their children. Boers told sympathetic English neighbours that they must have protection or they would take the road, and

¹ G. S. Preller, *Retief*, pp. 37 ff.

Englishmen replied that they too felt like trekking if only they knew how.

Behind and around it all 'unprecedented drought' continued, while hundred-tongued rumour was busy as it had always been before any frontier upheaval. Once the crisis of the war had passed, Grahamstowners let loose the canard that the Kat River Hottentots, who were at that moment doing their duty under missionary leadership, had incited the Kaffirs to attack. Presently it was said and believed that the Hottentot Cape Corps, which was keeping order manfully in Queen Adelaide when all else had failed, were getting out of hand. Later still, a reminiscence probably of the foundation of the Kat River Settlement, men were told that the Government proposed to give all available frontier farms to Hottentots. Probably some of the wilder stories were set going by speculators eager to buy up farms cheaply, or to sell waggons and teams and stores to prospective trekkers, or to give good golden guineas in exchange for paper at the rate of twenty-three shillings to the pound. But no story was too wild to be believed, how that the Evangelically inclined Government was going to force good Calvinist Boers to become Roman Catholics, or to compel all able-bodied Afrikaners to serve as soldiers even beyond the Colonial frontiers under the hated and despised European discipline. Some said that the necessary uniforms had positively arrived at the Castle.

Meanwhile, during the first half of 1836, officials had been busy compiling the lists of claims for slave compensation and collecting the moderate but sorely grudged fees from the claimants. That business had been finished in June. Then, after a long and anxious time of waiting, the desolating news had arrived in

November that a mere two-fifths of the assessed value would be paid, partly in cash and partly in government stock, and that only in inaccessible London. Townsmen might know how to deal with banks and stocks and such-like mysteries, but Boers as a rule did not. They must sell their claims to travelling agents at a discount or else let them go by default, either from ignorance or lack of opportunity to sell or sheer anger at such meagre compensation.

As if all this were not enough, the Governor's settlement of the eastern frontier problem was upset. D'Urban had tied Stockenstrom's hands by hurriedly withdrawing martial law; but he had held on as long as he could, hoping for definite and precise instructions from the Colonial Secretary. Thanks mainly to his own extraordinary methods of conducting official correspondence, his troubled chief had not been able to send him any. At the close of the year, D'Urban acted impulsively on one interpretation of the conflicting instructions he had received, and jettisoned the Province of Queen Adelaide and the Stormberg area. Frontiersmen could not know all that lay behind D'Urban's hasty act. What they saw was that a good Governor had made a good settlement to their way of thinking, and that a distant and presumably ill-disposed Imperial authority had overturned it.

Then, in December 1836, Lieutenant-Governor Stockenstrom made treaties with the lately hostile Kaffir chiefs, setting up elaborate machinery for the maintenance of peace and the mutual restoration of stolen cattle. Those treaties answered better than frontier tradition would have it, but frontiersmen at the close of 1836 were in no mood to deal with Kaffirs on equal terms nor to put up with checks upon their free-

dom of action if by any means they could escape them. The British settlers must do the best they could, and so must those Afrikanders who chose to remain in the Old Colony. But the rest could get away from it all by trekking, and now that martial law was gone trekking was easier than it had been. What though the Parliament at Westminster had just passed the Cape of Good Hope Punishment Act subjecting all British citizens south of the twenty-fifth degree of south latitude to the Cape criminal law, that law was useless unless the accused could be brought back within the limits of the Colony. Who was to do that once a man had trekked away beyond the Orange river on to the free soil of the High Veld?

So the Trekkers went drifting out of the tumultuous frontier districts, party by party, all the way round from Algoa Bay to Graaff-Reinet and Beaufort and the Hantam.

They went from mixed motives and with mixed feelings: hopes of better things and of a fresh start, the excitement of adventure, loyalty to the family or the clan, loyalty to the leading local official, fear of isolation when so many of their neighbours were trekking, the dependence of the *bywoner* on his landlord. But the need or desire for new land was very general, and common to all was a determination to live no longer in a colony where the divinely appointed colour bar was so flagrantly disregarded.

Many trekked with little sense of financial loss. Some Trekkers had no farms of their own to leave,¹ and others obtained good prices either in money or in much-needed equipment from English speculators and

¹ My colleague, Professor H. A. Reyburn, has given me valuable information on this point

Afrikaner neighbours with an eye on the possibilities of woolled sheep; good prices, that is, if men took into account the fact that many of these farms had been originally free grants and still lacked title-deeds or anything much in the way of improvements.

Again, a good deal of household stuff could be packed on the waggons. One housewife at all events had three waggons, the two first loaded with clothes and dress materials and bedding, and the third with groceries, dried fruit and other sweetstuffs, while another presently had to lament the loss of a fine set of chairs when her waggon overturned on the precipitous passes of the Drakensberg. These may have been exceptional cases, but everyone could reckon on taking stools, chests and small tables, beside the ploughs and picks and spades, the seed and the fruit-trees carefully wrapped up, and of course flour, coffee, sugar, tea, clothing materials, salt, tobacco, and anything up to 300 lb. weight of gunpowder. Over and above all that, their horses and cattle and sheep, their real wealth, went with them beside the waggons.

There was, however, the other side to the story. Waggon were narrow. Goods and chattels soon mounted up to a short ton. Much household gear must be left behind by the better-to-do folk, and many homesteads in which the family had grown up. Prices ranged low on the more exposed parts of the frontier or wherever numbers of farms were thrown on the market together. Some farmers let their places go for an old song, for an apple and an egg as they put it. Some simply left them standing.

All or nearly all of the Trekkers must have felt that the Trek was a great uprooting, and those who did not feel it so at the time came to feel it so in retrospect. Such few writings and still fewer songs as have come down

from those days are full of the note of melancholy, of sorrow at parting from old home ties and auld lang syne.¹ It need not all be taken at the foot of the letter. The Trekkers were human and waxed sentimental as most men have done who are 'off to Philadelphia in the morning'. But when every allowance has been made, the fact remains that unwilling Trekkers felt that the exodus had been forced on them by an unsympathetic government, and the willing found a natural satisfaction in blaming the authorities for making them do what desire and perhaps ambition prompted them to do.

As a community the Trekkers went out of the Old Colony in a state of mind that ranged from a fury of suspicion against the British Government to a dull resentment. They would have no more to do with it or its Colony. They were going up out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, into the Promised Land. And soon they believed they had found their Moses. Piet Retief had played a man's part in the recent Kaffir war and had earned the friendship of the Governor himself thereby. When he trekked early in 1837 scores went with him and scores followed. The Great Trek which had hitherto been an intermittent trickle became something like a stream.

For later on, when news of disaster came in, bold men hurried off to the rescue, and later still glad tidings of victory encouraged more prudent folk to trek to lands made safe for Afrikander democracy. In the latest stages of the Great Trek many a man moved off to rejoice his friends and relations. He trekked away from the Colony, home.

Those who trekked with Retief or after him knew

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, i, 246, 259, 308.

for what they were trekking. On the eve of his departure Retief published a manifesto in the *Grahamstown Journal*, the frontier newspaper.¹ That manifesto was at once a confession of faith, a refutation of hostile critics, a programme of reform and a call to action. 'As we desire to stand high in the estimation of our brethren', Retief wrote, seeking to put the Trekkers right with themselves and the world, 'be it known *inter alia* that we are resolved, wherever we go, that we will uphold the just principle of liberty; but whilst we will take care that no one shall be in a state of slavery, it is our determination to maintain such regulations as may suppress crime and preserve proper relations between master and servant. . . . We will not molest any people, nor deprive them of the smallest property; but, if attacked, we shall consider ourselves fully justified in defending our persons and effects to the utmost of our ability. . . . We propose . . . to make known to the native tribes our intentions, and our desire to live in peace and friendly intercourse with them. . . . We quit this Colony under the full assurance that the English Government has nothing more to require of us, and will allow us to govern ourselves without interference in future.'

There it all was, unmistakably: a frontier society, an Afrikaner republic, full forty years after the fall of republican Swellendam and Graaff-Reinet. Much of the subsequent history of southern Africa has been a commentary on Piet Retief's manifesto. |

¹ *Vide* p. 98 n. 1.

CHAPTER IV

MSILIKAZI

The bachelor will miss you clear
To fight another day;
But the married man, 'e says, 'No fear',
'E wants you out of the way
Of 'Im and 'Er and It
(An' 'is road to 'is farm or the sea). . .

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE original plan of the Great Trek, for planned it was in broad outline, was that each party should get away as best it could across the Orange river and make its way through Griqua Philippolis to the Blesberg near the kraal of Moroko, chief of the Barolong, at Thaba Nchu on the Basuto border. Time enough then to decide whether the Promised Land was to be sought in Natal or in the Transvaal.

Generally speaking that plan was carried out by the Trekkers of 1836 and 1837. Occasionally a single family would venture forth alone, but it would join itself to some party as soon as it could. Sometimes fifty, sixty, even a hundred waggons would draw together, but usually men travelled in small groups. It was more convenient so. They could keep in sight of each other better. Too many people, too many sheep and cattle in any one place for long together made intolerable demands on grazing and fuel and water.

The little trek party, the *trekkie*, was the unit. Each

went forward under a chosen leader, perhaps the field-cornet or commandant from the old home district or ward, perhaps the most important or masterful neighbour, perhaps the head of a great group of related families. These *trekkies* owed allegiance to one or other of the principal leaders, and so they went forming and scattering, crossing and swerving and reuniting, and all following the same general direction. There was plenty of room and plenty of time.

These trek parties that formed the Great Trek had been anticipated. A little before the close of 1835 two small parties had moved off on their own account and, regardless of the Blcsberg or any other rendezvous, had pushed on into the northern Transvaal. The first of these *voortrekke* had been led by Louis Trigardt, the second by Janse van Rensburg.

Of 'Lange Hans' van Rensburg little is known except that his end was tragic. But of Trigardt we know a good deal. For Trigardt kept a diary in a spelling all his own, full of dry humour and the record of such practical matters as grazing and water, the health of his beasts, the possibility of getting forward or back, and his own reactions to the folk who formed his party and van Rensburg's.¹ Trigardt's diary is the most permanent result of that joint Odyssey. Indeed it would be hard to point to any other, for no settlement was born of it, and the great majority of the voyagers died in the wilderness or at Delagoa Bay. It can hardly be claimed that their effort encouraged others to follow in their footsteps, for there were plenty of others who meant to

¹ *Dagboek van Louis Trigardt* (ed. G. S. Preller); C. Fuller, *Louis Trigardt's Trek across the Drakensberg, 1837-38* (Van Riebeeck Society No. 13).

go far north in any event. But there is the diary, the simple record of human courage and endurance and resource. Records like that are worth having for their own sake. Trigardt's diary is also an admirable corrective to any too generalised and bloodless conception of the Trek, a big movement of many folk spread over a number of years. To follow out the fortunes of one man and his companions day by day brings the whole business home as nothing else can. Trigardt's party, and for the matter of that van Rensburg's also, was a microcosm of the Trek. That is why some account of their forlorn venture must be given before going on to deal with the Great Trek itself.

Trigardt was the grandson of a Swede and son of a Graaff-Reinet die-hard who had been marched off to the Castle by the British in 1799. Louis got the education from a travelling *meester* that was customary for the son of a well-to-do Somerset Boer of his day, married in due time, and became the father of five children. Presently drought and reform troubled him and, in 1829, he sent his eldest son with the stock far into Kaffirland. Three years later he and some thirty other heads of families joined this son and settled on the banks of the Indwe river. There they lived at peace with the neighbouring Xosa Great Chief. Trigardt was the leader of the little group. He was the most wealthy man amongst them, for he owned ten slaves while all the rest had but five between them. His diary suggests that he was a good leader of men, kindly, patient and humane, but for all that he was capable of violent temper if tried too hard.

Trigardt and some of his neighbours got on the move northward in May 1835. It was better so. Troops and commandos were sweeping into Kaffirland, and Tri-

gardt's relations with the tribes had been so equivocal that the authorities had offered a reward for his apprehension. Besides, he could not stomach emancipation. His ten slaves had run away back to the Colony and freedom, and, since he had broken the law by trying to hold them outside the frontier, he had forfeited all claim to compensation. His party trekked on slowly to the south bank of the Orange, and was there joined by van Rensburg with a party of the same size. By the New Year of 1836 they had crossed the great river high up and were heading north.

There were nine weapon-bearing men in Trigardt's party and ten in van Rensburg's, nearly all of them married. There were thirty children or so with each group. Look at Trigardt's party in more detail: Louis himself, fifty-three years of age, but tough and full of energy; his younger son, Pieter, a fine, lovable lad and his father's favourite; the elder son, Carel, who was none of these things; two feckless and easily led *bywoners*; an aged and decrepit *meester*; a Frenchman with more than his share of cruelty, a coloured wife, and off-coloured children; a little retinue of Bushman servants; and, finally, Jan Pretorius, the second-in-command, opinionated, quarrelsome and ambitious to have a show of his own to run. All must make shift with nine waggons.

The two little parties moved northward slowly across the Caledon river, and thence over the grass plains of the eastern Orange Free State towards the Vaal river. Five miles a day they went, since sheep could not do more than that, with long halts where the water and grass were good or when the ewes were lambing. Sometimes, especially when danger threatened, the two parties would keep together; but apart from wild beasts, there was not much apparent danger. They kept well

to the west of the tribes that lined the banks of the Caledon river, and they were far across the Vaal close to where Middelburg now stands before they saw the first considerable body of natives since quitting Kaffirland. Deserted kraals and dead men's bones in plenty, but not many men alive, for these were the parts where Mantatis and Matabele and Zulus had all 'washed their spears' at one time or another recently.

The Trigardts kept what hold they could on the civilisation they were leaving behind. They observed Sunday as well as possible, though the days of the week were apt to become somewhat mixed where there was so little difference between day and day. The elder children read with the old *meester* by candlelight in the early morning and then went out with the cattle, conning over what they had just learned so that they might repeat it when they got home at evening. The younger children would read as a rule with their mothers. There were numberless things for those mothers to do, all the more as servants were scarce in the wilds. As for the men, their hands were full when the caravan was on the move, and when it was not, there was still game to be shot, guns and gear to be kept in order, endless repairs to the waggons, and, if natives were near, watch to be kept. And all the time talk, about the future route chiefly.

At last the two parties separated finally and in anger. The van Rensburgs went east towards Portuguese Delagoa Bay, and that was the last that was ever seen of them by white men.

Trigardt and his band pushed on northward still as far as the Zoutpansberg. There, on that high ground, after some preliminary difficulties with the local tribesmen, they settled for the time being.

They were not the first Europeans to have lived in

those parts. The honour of having been the first white inhabitant of the Transvaal had fallen to a border ruffian named Coenraad Buys. That worthy, wanted by successive Colonial governments in the early days of the nineteenth century, had found his way at last to the Zoutpansberg and, as his custom was, had married freely. One day he had gone out and never come back, but his half-caste children lived on where they had been born and there Trigardt found them.

Trigardt stayed for more than a year in the Zoutpansberg. On the whole his relations with the Buyses and his Bantu neighbours were friendly. Certainly he had no fear of them. He claimed the land on which he was established as his own; he would stand no nonsense about missing cattle; he was ready to let natives come in to barter skins and ivory and sweet cane and millet beer, but he would not suffer them to come armed, nor any, armed or unarmed, to sleep near his encampment without leave.

Trigardt and his folk built little houses and even a tiny school; they laid out gardens with dams and water-furrows complete; they still had 500 head of cattle besides sheep and goats, and the countryside swarmed with game. Life was as good as it had been in Kaffirland, with this advantage added that there was here no British commander to set a price upon a man's head.

There were of course troubles. Even a *trekkie* could be fissiparous. The jealous Pretorius went off with three other men and their families along van Rensburg's tracks. He was away for months. Then, having seen his beasts suffer much from tsetse fly and one of his confiding followers die of fever, he sent a message begging for help to his former chief, who silently helped him back with the aid of friendly tribesmen.

Other and graver troubles now began to press in upon the little company in the Zoutpansberg. Fever came, and queer horse and cattle sicknesses. They were terribly isolated. Once, in June 1836, a small party of Trekkers led by Hendrik Potgieter had visited them, but they had gone away again, and since then they had seen no white man. It was hard to replace worn clothing; the women missed their tea and coffee and sugar; the lead was running out. That was bad, even though lead could be eked out with local copper and tin, but what was really serious was that the gunpowder began to run low. No man could live on the veld without powder.

Twice, in March and April 1837, Trigardt sent letters to the Portuguese governor at Lourenço Marques. The first went astray; the second, in the hands of one of the Buyses, got through. But no one at the little fort in the swamps could make much of Trigardt's rendering of the Afrikaans of those days, so all his proposals for an exchange of cattle and the spoils of the chase for merchandise and gunpowder went for nothing. The Governor did, however, send a couple of black *askaris* to lead him to Delagoa Bay, and with them Trigardt set out on his incredible journey in and out among the mountains, and finally down the precipices of the Drakensberg mountains to the hot country below. It was a journey of several months. In places they must cut a road with the help of hired native labour; at the crisis of the descent they must take off the hind waggon-wheels and let the waggons slither down the steep slopes. To this day natives in those parts speak of the first white men who dropped out of the sky among them with waggons and horses and oxen.

At Komati Poort a Portuguese officer met the ad-

venturers with provisions and most welcome medicines and rum. Already fever had claimed some of the party, and the tsetse had decimated their cattle; nor did the progress by waggon and boat through the fever-soaked lowlands mend matters. Eight months out from the 'Souyt Pan Bergh' they reached Lourenço Marques and its kindly governor and his lady. There they died one by one. Trigardt's own wife died in May 1838. His heart was broken and he wrote no more. Soon he too was dead. A little later a ship fetched the survivors, twenty-six of them, all women and children, home to their friends in republican Natal. One man only had survived, Trigardt's elder son, Carel. At the time of the return to Natal he was away on his travels far up the east coast of Africa. Presently he too went to Natal. And that was the end of the Trigardt-Rensburg *voortrek*.

Long before Trigardt and his friends had crossed the Vaal, two other trek parties had set off in their tracks. Both were recruited from the newly occupied and ill-organised north-eastern districts, or even from beyond the Colonial borders. The first was led by Andries Hendrik Potgieter of the Tarka, the second by Sarel Cilliers of Colesberg.¹ These two parties were larger than Trigardt's. Potgieter had under him some forty armed men, counting lads of sixteen years as men, and perhaps fifty waggons; Cilliers could boast of a fighting tail of twenty-five or so. Each party was composed of neighbours, to a great extent of relatives. With Potgieter went his old father, destined to outlive him by many years and to die a centenarian, and three brothers and a brother-in-law. A son-in-law travelled with Cilliers. With Cilliers also went no less than eight

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, i, 117 ff.; iv, 15 ff.

families of Liebenbergs, four each of Broekhuisens and Britses, three of Krugers, and three again of the migratory van Rensburgs. One of the young Krugers, a boy of ten, was destined to become the famous president of the South African Republic.

Early in 1836 these two parties crossed the Orange at different points, between the present Aliwal North and Alleman's Drift lower down. The Potgieters at least found the great river in flood, so that the horses and oxen must swim it. For the rest, they built a raft of willow-trees and thus took over the waggons, the baggage, the small stock, and themselves, their women-folk singing psalm-book in hand. With joy and rejoicing they stepped ashore on free soil.

Once across the Orange the two parties converged. It was necessarily slow going. Scouts must go ahead each day to spy out the road; they had so few coloured servants with them that the boys must herd the cattle, and the women and children keep the small stock on the move and take their turn as waggon-drivers and *voorlopers*. There were constant delays by reason of sickness, accident and other adversities; delays while laggards came up, delays sometimes for a week at a time while the ewes lambed.

There were no human obstacles to the treks. Adam Kok's Griquas, through whose country they were passing, were friendly, and that was well, since these coloured folk lived and dressed more or less in European fashion and certainly knew how to use their horses and guns as well as any Boer or the hated coloured Cape Mounted Riflemen in the frontier districts. Every now and then they would meet brother Afrikaners already settled in those parts, and presently, a little farther north, broad-smiling Basutos who came in to barter

mealies and beans and kaffir corn for cattle and sheep. Occasionally, too, there would be a Colonial hunter, and once at least a sporting British captain returning from the Matabele country far beyond the Vaal.

At last the Potgieter and Cilliers treks joined hands, sixty-five armed men all told. The Potgieters were in the majority, and at a general meeting saw to it that their leader was elected commandant and trek ruler with Cilliers as his deputy.

It was the best arrangement possible. The two men were very dissimilar, but not so greatly that they could not get on well enough together, even though Potgieter was Dopper and Cilliers Orthodox. Potgieter was a tall man of six feet or so, lean, wiry, lanky even in his short blue moleskin Dopper jacket and inadequate trousers. But for all his taciturnity and the ungainly looks that were not softened by his long darkish hair, clean-shaven upper lip and brown scrubby beard cropped close to the chin, 'Blauwberg' was a leader, and men knew it. He had a good head under his wide, flapping straw hat with its green lining, broad cheekbones and strong thick nose with deep vertical lines where the eyebrows met, and the wrinkles at the outer corners of the eyes that come from gazing long distances in a strong sun. His sinewy hands with their long fingers and his bright blue eyes spoke of energy and determination. Above all, he had a way with him. He was at home with children, who always looked to him for sweets and cakes; it is recorded of him that he never had to punish a subordinate officer but just reasoned with him and sent him away more devoted to his interests than ever. Later on, there were many men in his part of the Transvaal who were prepared to have him as permanent dictator.¹

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, i, 263; iv, 2, 8.

Sarel Cilliers, on the other hand, was a short, thick-set, lively man, ruddy and of a fair countenance, with fair hair, clean-shaven upper lip and a short light-coloured beard. He was self-confident, not to say self-assertive, an eloquent speaker ever ready to lead the camp in prayer or to embark on theological debates. In these last he waxed warm and reinforced his torrent of words with a paralysing stare which took the heart out of opponents. There was a certain unctuousness about his speech and, judging from his reminiscences as an old man, he was prone to see himself as the centre of the picture, sometimes with Jehovah, sometimes without. But he was a good man to have in a trekker camp. He was warm-hearted, he knew how to be tactful, he was set upon seeing that all things went decently and in order, whether between faction and faction or between man and wife. And he was a doughty fighter.

The Potgieter-Cilliers party went northwards, keeping much farther to the east than Trigardt had done, crossing the rivers that flow westward through the Free State high up and naming many of them. The Modder was low and they forded its muddy waters easily; the banks of the Vet swarmed with fine fat game; the Sand river was more sand than water, as is the way with many South African streams in the dry season.

It was good sheep and cattle country, the true High Veld. As far as mere height above sea-level went, they had been on the High Veld as soon as they had crossed the Stormberg mountains to the south of the Orange. But there, and on the far side of the river also, the karoo vegetation had held its own against the grass well into the confines of Griqua Philippolis. Then at last the karoo bush confessed itself beaten. Great billows of waving grass stretched away ahead interminably.

There was more variety in the region through which the joint trek party was actually passing than on the unbroken plains farther west. Low kopjes rose abruptly with boulder-strewn slopes and tops cut clean and flat as with a knife. Light-green bushes lined the streams. Away on the right hand going north was a tumbled sea of blue hills, and behind, very faint, the blue-grey mountain peaks of Basutoland under their canopy of cloud. On the plains men must rely on water led from springs as in so many parts of the Cape Colony. But here on both sides of the Caledon river the rain-clouds still carried enough water, after bursting on the mighty Drakensberg, to enable men to grow corn without irrigation. Hence natives were to be found there.

Some of these Caledon river tribes were almost as recent arrivals as the Trekkers themselves: Korannas, a few half-castes, and, more notable than either, Moroko and his Barolong at Thaba Nchu near the Trekkers' rallying-point at the Blesberg. But other chiefs were old inhabitants. Sikonyela the Batlokua ruled in the upper valley of the Caledon. He was a formidable potentate possessed of a few guns and horses, son of Ma-Ntatisi, queen of the once dreaded Mantatis, who still lived, although a terror no longer. East of the river, but with his outposts already to the west of it, was Moshesh. He was the most important of all these chiefs, organiser of the growing Basuto confederacy, strong in his impregnable hill-fortress of Thaba Bosigo and the wise counsel of the Paris Evangelical missionaries. Elsewhere Wesleyans sought to guide chiefs and their motley peoples in the way they should go.

There were not many human beings to be seen in the open plains, just a few Bushmen beyond the Modder, some Koranna Hottentots on the upper Vet, and a small

clan of Bantu, Bataungs, under their chief Makwana, a little farther to the north near Sand river. Potgieter made treaties of friendship with all these chieftains, especially with Makwana in whose country his trek camped towards the end of May 1836.

From the headquarters on Sand river, Potgieter, Cilliers and ten others rode north to inspect the road to Delagoa Bay, if such existed, and to make contact with Trigardt. Both leaders had long talked of finding an outlet to the Indian Ocean free from British control, and both were eager to see the Transvaal, good country, they had heard, and much farther away from the British than was Transorangia or Makwana's country. They found the south-eastern and eastern Transvaal all they had been led to expect, fine grazing country with never a native to be seen all the way from Sand river to Rhenoster Poort, fully 200 miles. Thereafter there were tribesmen in plenty working iron and tin, but apparently not the unfamiliar asbestos which the travellers saw in the Olifants river valley. They found the Trigardts in the distant Zoutpansberg. With them they searched in vain for the vanished van Rensburgs as far north as the baobab and bamboo thickets of the broad Limpopo; they searched also in vain for a waggon-road down the wall of the Drakensberg eastward. Then they rode away to rejoin their comrades, taking with them a specimen of Zoutpansberg gold ore. Early in September they came south to the Vaal. They were greeted with tales of disaster. The Matabele were on the war-path.

All the Caledon valley chiefs and the Griquas and their missionaries had spoken with awe of the Matabele and of their king, Msilikazi. Makwana had been in a positive state of terror, for Msilikazi was said to claim

all and more than all the land he regarded as his own. Well might Makwana fear. The Matabele were Zulus.

Msilikazi had been one of the captains of Chaka, king of the Zulus and the perfecter, though not inventor, of the Zulu military machine. He had fallen foul of his master some twenty years before the Great Trek began, and knowing what the end of that misfortune must be, had fled with his men across the Drakensberg on to the High Veld. In Zulu fashion he had swept away all who stood in his path, and had settled first on the plains just north of the Magaliesberg range in the west-central Transvaal. Tribes such as the Swazis sheltered themselves from his impis in the mountains of the eastern Transvaal, the Bavenda and Knobnoses (Maguamba) farther north in the Zoutpansberg.

But Msilikazi found that even there the vengeful Zulu monarchy could reach him. In 1832, Dingaan, brother, murderer and successor of Chaka, had sent a punitive expedition against him, and, though he had beaten it off, Msilikazi had thought it prudent to move farther west and to plant his chief kraals at Kapain and Mosega in the fertile Marico river valley. He cleared the country as before and drove the wrecks of Bechuana tribes out on to the poor grass-lands that fade away into the Kalahari Desert.

The Matabele had been originally pure Zulus, and though, by dint of incorporating in their ranks the youths of scattered tribes they were becoming a mixed people, they still held fast to the Zulu military tradition. Msilikazi could put some 20,000 warriors into the field, organised in regiments and taught to fight in good order with the 'bull's head' in the centre, the 'horns' tapering away on either flank to encircle the enemy

before the order to charge were given, and the reserve in the rear. They were splendid in their panoply, terrible as an army with banners: high feather head-dresses, kilts of wild cat or leopard tails, oxtails at wrist, elbow, knee and, cut short, at the ankle. Each man carried a great ox-hide shield, black and white for the youths, red and white for the veterans, an oval shield with sharp ends covering the whole body. He carried also a knobkerrie of hard wood, short and round-headed, and a couple of light throwing assegais. But the weapon on which he was taught to rely was the short broad-bladed assegai. That was to the Matabele what the sword had been to the legionary or the bayonet to the British infantry. It was the weapon the impi closed with, stabbing. And as they stabbed, they hissed.

Discipline in the Matabele as in the parent Zulu army was rigid and fierce. It was that which marked out both kindred monarchies from other Bantu communities of their day as clearly as the Napoleonic Empire had been marked out from other European polities. Yet Msilikazi, like Chaka and Dingaan, was approachable. Europeans found him so, provided they drew near to him, King of Kings, the Great Elephant, Eater of Men, with due circumspection, bearing gifts. More than one missionary had visited him, and at the close of 1835 a small group of American Presbyterian missionaries had actually set up a station near his kraals at Mosega. A little later Dr. Andrew Smith, a scientist, making the rounds of all the chiefs that bordered the Trekkers' plains from Griqua Philippolis to Mosega, had brought Msilikazi messages of goodwill from the Governor at Cape Town and his august Sovereign, and, in the March of this very year 1836,

a Matabele induna had journeyed south to Cape Town and set his mark beside Sir Benjamin D'Urban's signature to an innocuous and non-committal treaty of amity. To missionaries and hunters who came thus 'by one and one' Msilikazi would 'give the road'. But those who came 'like armies' must see to themselves. It was the misfortune of the Trekkers that they came thus.

Luck had been with the first little parties. The Zoutpansberg *kommissie trek* of 1834, the Trigardt trek, and Potgieter's own reconnaissance had moved across the Vaal well away to the east out of touch with the Matabele. But during their leaders' absence, the joint Potgieter-Cilliers trek had moved north and scattered along the southern bank of the Vaal. Some of the more confident or foolhardy had even crossed the broad yellow river and moved far westward down its right bank. There, Matabele patrols came down upon them out of the blue.

The first party which the Matabele caught was not, strictly speaking, a trek party. It was an elephant-hunting expedition from the sparsely peopled, hardly even annexed north-eastern corner of the Colony, eight white men and some coloured servants led by Stephanus Erasmus, a field-cornet of those parts, with five waggons. The white men were out hunting when the patrol came down upon their camp, and it was thanks to this that Erasmus and three others escaped. The rest of their party were slain round the waggons or in the open.

Erasmus and his surviving son managed to find their way to the nearest Trekker encampment and, with the eleven men of that party, rode back to rescue their waggons. But they met the Matabele coming on 500 or 600 strong and regained their camp just in time to form laager. News of the slaughter had mean-

while spread and stragglers had hurried in, so that there were now thirty-five men available. For six hours, from ten in the morning till four in the afternoon, the warriors tried to hack their way into the waggon-ring. In the end they gave it up and withdrew, leaving perhaps a third of their number on the field. One Boer they had slain inside the laager, and another with a few coloured servants in the open. That was the measure of the superiority of *snaphaan* and laagered waggons in the hands of determined men and women over the assegai and the most highly disciplined Bantu soldiery.¹

The second Matabele patrol had better fortune. They surprised some of the many Liebenbergs, who formed part of Cilliers's trek, farther up the river and too far away from the rest to have been warned of the Erasmus disaster. They slew nearly all, eight white men and women including an unhappy Scottish *meester* named Macdonald, besides four children and a dozen coloured servants. The two patrols then joined up and went to report to their king, taking three of the Liebenberg children with them.

On receipt of these ill tidings, Potgieter called in his followers from beyond the Vaal, and laagered on a little hill between the Wilge and Rhenoster rivers in the north-eastern Free State.²

The laager on the hill that was soon to be called Vegkop (Battle) was really an entrenched camp, fifty heavy waggons in a ring, lashed together end to end by the trek-chains with thorn-bushes piled in the openings and woven into the spokes of the wheels. Four waggons were drawn up in a square in the centre and roofed over

¹ *Voortrektermense*, iii, 3, 16.

² On Vegkop, *vide Voortrektermense*, i, 125; ii, 63; iii, 4, 17; J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i, 238.



THE DEFENCE OF A LAAGER
from a drawing by Charles Davidson Bell, 1846

with planks and raw hides as a shelter for the women and children. It was a strong place against such ill-equipped enemies as the Matabele, but its weakness was that there were only forty men to defend it. However, each man had a spare gun or two which his wife could load for him, and while they waited they cast a plentiful supply of bullets, small so that they would slip down the barrel easily and nicked across and across so that they would split up in flight. The women busily sewed little buckskin bags for the slugs that were so deadly at close quarters. Each man had his appointed place behind the waggon-wall with dishes handy to hold his powder and bullets. Their horses they could bring within the laager, but their sheep and cattle and even their irreplaceable draught oxen must take their chance in the open. The rest was just sitting and waiting.

The little force at Vegkop had not long to wait. Early in the morning of 19 October a Bataung servant gave the alarm.

The fight that followed was typical of other battles to come. In each of its two stages, in the open and behind the waggons, the Boers employed tactics that the Matabele had no means of countering. Courage being taken as common to both sides, the fundamental factor that made for the Boers' victory was that they had horses and guns and the Matabele had neither. The assegai had an effective range of fifty yards, the Boer gun was deadly at twice that range. Remember the ox's knuckle-bone at eighty paces. At close quarters the assegai hurled by the stoutest arm could not pierce the four layers of canvas that formed the waggon-tilts, but a blast of slugs or splintering bullets from a *snaphaan* might easily account for half a dozen warriors.

Neither Matabele nor Zulus had a chance in the open or against a laager provided the Boers' nerve held and their ammunition did not give out. Their one hope was to lure their foes into broken country where they could not manœuvre, and that they had no opportunity of doing at Vegkop.

The alarm having been given, Cilliers offered up prayer for victory and then followed Potgieter out at the head of every available man. There were the Matabele, fully 5000 of them, a great swarthy mass. Potgieter rode up close to their induna and tried to parley, but the warriors leapt to their feet with a loud hiss and began to spread their encircling horns. At that the Boers sprang from their horses, fired, mounted, reloaded and fired again and again, falling back steadily as the enemy came on. Each man must have fired a dozen rounds or so in this running fight before they got back within the waggon-ring and blocked the narrow entrance. The Matabele squatted just out of range.

Three of the Boers made a bolt for it and got clear away, but the rest went to their stations, washed their guns and listened to Cilliers's renewed prayers, while Potgieter went among the women encouraging them. It was nervous work waiting. Potgieter's own brother begged leave to go out and lure the enemy on and thus end the strain. 'If I must be killed', he cried, 'then I must, but I can't stand the waiting any longer.'¹ Potgieter would not have it, at least not until he had tried less desperate methods. Seizing a long whip-stock, he tied a red rag to it and waved it at the enemy. At once the Matabele took up the challenge. They leapt up, hissed their war-cry and came on.

Potgieter and his men held their fire till the enemy

¹ *Voortrekkermeuse*, iii, 20.

were within thirty paces, and then they broke into rapid fire, man and wife loading a handful of powder at a time and anything that would go down the barrel, firing and reloading as hard as they could. The Matabele swarmed round the waggons. They tore at the thorn-bushes but could not wrench them free, they tugged at the waggons but could not shift them, while those behind hurled their assegais high into the air to fall inside the laager. It was useless. The Matabele fell in heaps and at length drew off amid heartfelt hosannas from the defenders, pious cheers that were damped by the sight of their flocks and herds being driven off.

So the Boers waited once more and, while they waited, they picked off such warriors as lay on the ground sweating. Dead men do not sweat, and whether these were the wounded or the wily waiting close to the laager for the next rush, the defenders could not afford to take risks. A dead Matabele was the best kind of Matabele under the circumstances. There would assuredly be none of their own wounded if once the warriors broke the waggon-ring. So they shot them as they lay.¹

At length Potgieter and half a dozen of his best men rode out and drew the enemy on again. Once more the Matabele charged and struggled round the stubborn waggons; once more they were shot down, until at last they turned and went, driving the captured beasts before them.

The defenders of Vegkop stood victorious, but they were in sorry plight. Two of their number, both relatives of their leader, had been killed by assegais and every third man bore a wound. Their draught animals were gone, they were short of food, and their nearest known succour lay far away south at Thaba Nchu.

¹ *Voortrekhermenste*, iii, 21; also *ibid.*, i, 191, 233; *Annals*, i, 246, 493.

Thither a messenger was sent post-haste with instructions to ride on into the Colony to beat up reinforcements. At length help came. The friendly Moroko and his Wesleyan missionary, James Archbell, sent up oxen, and Gerrit Maritz furnished a guard of stout burghers from the large trek he had just brought to Thaba Nchu from Graaff-Reinet. With their aid the Vegkop party returned southward.

By thus driving in the over-confident Trekker advance guard, the Matabele had enforced a concentration at the appointed rendezvous at the Blesberg.¹ There the Potgieters found themselves outnumbered by the new-comers, whose *trekkies*, rolling in one by one in the wake of Maritz's sky-blue waggons and his iron cannon, soon numbered 100 waggons. There was the promise of trouble in plenty between the two parties. Apart from the fact that the Potgieters had had to be rescued and the Maritzes had helped in their rescue, no two men brought up in the frontier districts could have been less alike than the leaders. Maritz was the younger of the two by some years, a business man, virtually a townsman, dapper, voluble, ambitious and self-confident. He was, moreover, Orthodox and somewhat broad at that. Hendrik Potgieter, on the other hand, was a man of forty-five and wealthy in cattle, but a backvelder out and out, a man of few words and a Dopper.

For the moment all went well. On 2 December a simple constitution was drawn up and adopted at a mass meeting. Potgieter was unanimously elected commandant of the combined treks and chairman of the Krygsraad (Council of War). Maritz was chosen *voorsitter*

¹ From November 1836 to January 1839 the chief Trekker source is the *Dagboek van Erasmus Smit* (ed. G. S. Preller, *Voortrekker-mense*, ii).

(president) of the Volksraad and landdrost of the Court. Volksraad and Court were one and the same body of seven elected persons sitting in different capacities, to make laws and to administer justice under those laws. Here was Leviathan in miniature. But it was a limited Leviathan. For though 'the Generality of Men, composing Het Volk', swore to obey these judges, the seven were themselves bound to adhere strictly to such laws and regulations as might be passed at a general meeting.¹ Thus from the very start there was doubt whether the last word lay with the Volksraad or with the Sovereign People. It was a question that was to vex the future Transvaal to the end of its days as a republic.

The next step must obviously be the punishment of Msilikazi and the recovery of the waggon and stock his warriors had carried away. Preparations went forward not without alarms, first, that the Matabele were coming, and then, when Archbell's good counsel and the non-arrival of the impis had dispelled that fear, that neighbouring Korannas were about to fall upon them. That fear Archbell also dissipated, and, just after the New Year of 1837, the punitive expedition set out.²

It was a small enough force: 107 Boers and 40 Griquas and Korannas all mounted and fully armed, with 60 Barolong on foot to drive the cattle. Moving swiftly through empty country, they fell upon the Matabele kraals at Mosega at dawn. The warriors fought well, but their induna was absent and they could not stand up to the terrible guns. They lost 400 men and then fled, leaving the victors to burn the kraals and retire at their leisure with the loss of only four of the

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, i, 297.

² *Ibid.*, iii, 38, 88; *Annals*, i, 232, 240.

Barolongs. The victorious commando took with them more than 7000 cattle and the lost waggons, and also the three American missionaries, who had made no impression yet on the minds and hearts of the Matabele and, as events were shaping, saw no hope of making any. One of the Americans was Daniel Lindley, who was to be a good friend to the Trekkers later on.

If the Potgieter-Maritz commando had set out to Mosega full of confidence, it came back with confidence redoubled by the ease of this profitable victory. Confidence was increased by what they found at the Blesberg. Three hundred waggons were assembled there. Reinforcements from the Colony had come in fast during their absence, and more were coming.¹ The waggon-raft on the Orange was now an established institution. No need for *trekkies* to send out scouts to find the way. The Trekkers' Road lay clear for all to see from Norval's Pont to the Blesberg, a wide churned-up strip of veld. Along it came the waggons, sometimes in single file, sometimes two, three, even four columns abreast to check straggling, with wide intervals to give room for the flocks and herds. Even visitors came up from the Colony to see the Trekker encampments and go home again. One of them brought with him a coloured youth, Jan Bantjes, who could write well. Bantjes stayed on and found much call for his services in a community in which ready penmen were rare.²

Perhaps it was this confidence that led the Trekkers to quarrel with an easy mind. At all events, quarrel they did, Maritzes against Potgieters.

It is difficult to see how a quarrel between the two champions could have been avoided indefinitely. They

¹ Perhaps 1000 souls exclusive of coloured servants.

² *Voortrekkermense*, ii, 79.

were what they were, and Maritz as *voorsitter* of the legislature was jealous of the power that Potgieter wielded as commandant, the nearest approach to a head of the executive that the Trekker Maatschappij (Company) had. Once they had quarrelled, their followers could be trusted to keep the quarrel alive with fierce party loyalty even after their chiefs were weary of it. The struggle in the Republics between the Volksraad party and the party of the Commandant was destined to persist for many years.

The first sign of open trouble had been over the distribution of the loot of the recent Mosega campaign. Maritz had demanded equal division, the declaration of a dividend; but Potgieter, whose people had been plundered, insisted that they should be recompensed first. On the whole Potgieter had had his way, but back at the Blesberg the quarrel blazed up on that most inflammable of all issues, religion.

No regular clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Colony had hitherto accompanied the Trek. Nor was one likely to do so, for as a body the Colonial clergy disapproved of it as strongly as ever the eastern clergy of the United States did of the trek west into Wisconsin or out along the Oregon Trail. To them the Great Trek was an exodus without a Moses or an Aaron and with no sure promise of a Canaan, a flouting of the powers ordained of God, an imperilling of the souls of parents and still more of children far removed from the means of grace. Maritz had done the best he could under these circumstances. He had brought with him a worthy Hollander, Erasmus Smit, to act as private chaplain to his party and possibly as minister to the whole Trek. It was over Smit's unhappy person that the quarrel broke out.

Short, stout and ruddy, with a close-clipped grey beard and a cast in one eye, 'Old Father Smit' gave the impression of being old, weak and ill. Sickly he was, but he was only fifty-nine, and, had he known it, with another quarter of a century before him. He had been born in Amsterdam and could remember seeing Pichegru's ragged battalions marching in with rusty bread and raw meat impaled upon their bayonets. He had come to the Cape as a mission teacher in the service of the more or less cosmopolitan London Missionary Society during the Batavian administration, but had left the service of that Society in 1822. Since then he had made a living as schoolmaster at Olifants Hoek near Algoa Bay and had married Susanna, Gerrit Maritz's sister, a buxom lady twenty years his junior and of as managing a disposition as was her brother.

Erasmus Smit's woes and much else of greater import can be read in his diary. He did his best. He was patient and self-sacrificing except where clerical rivals were concerned. He was punctual and unremitting in the discharge of his duties, preaching regularly in the space between three or four waggons roofed over with a bucksail that served him for a church. What though his idea of a hunting mass was a service that began at seven and ended at nine. His congregation, like the Scots of their day, liked long discourses. His troubles arose from other sources.

Smit had been welcomed by Sarel Cilliers, who until his coming had led the camp services, and he naturally had Maritz's support. But though as mission teacher he was better qualified professionally than anyone else in either laager to give the Trekkers the spiritual comfort they craved, he was not an ordained minister. Until he was legitimised somehow, he could neither baptize

nor perform the marriage ceremony, but must suffer Maritz as landdrost to unite couples in the bonds of civil matrimony, Batavian fashion, without the participation of the Church. And until he was installed he saw no prospect of drawing the salary which he had been promised, nor of looking forward to the title of Emeritus when he should retire and to provision for his widow after his death.

Maritz could not induce the Volksraad to install Smit as official predikant. The opposition came chiefly from the Potgieters. They would have nothing to do with Smit but preferred to sit at the feet of Archbell, who, Wesleyan though he might be, was fully qualified to undertake the cure of souls. So the quarrel raged while Smit confided to his diary his fears lest the Arminian 'Archibald' should oust him from his promised congregation. It was in keeping with his dismal thoughts that he should have noted the hugest swarm of locusts he had ever seen in Africa eating up, as it were, all his fair hopes of seeing the 'New Land'.

The darkest hour comes before the dawn. For some time past men in the Maritz camp had been talking of Piet Retief as the possible saviour of society. Now news came that at last he was on his way to the Blesberg.

There can be little doubt that Retief had decided long ago to trek in any event. How could he who had stood beside Maritz in 1834 do otherwise? But he had dallied in the Colony for the sake of his fellow-burghers, hoping to induce Stockenström to conduct his frontier policy more on Winterberg lines and less on those of Westminster; now, hope having faded and martial law having been withdrawn, he decided to go. His eldest brother had trekked already; his wife was quietly determined to go up out of the Cities of the Plain,

and she could be trusted not to look back; latterly he had been in correspondence with Maritz. Finally, many humble folk in the Winterberg and others who had been disappointed of D'Urban's promised grants of land in the Stormberg area told him they were waiting for him. He inspanned, sent his famous manifesto to the *Grahamstown Journal*, which had already printed his long and acrimonious correspondence with the Lieutenant-Governor, and was dismissed from his field commandantship by Stockenstrom for that bold piece of propaganda.

Thus it was wearing the political martyr's crown that Retief moved towards the Orange drifts, gathering recruits at every halt till 120 good men and 100 waggons were following in his wake. Early in April 1837 he found Maritz and a deputation drawn from all the laagers waiting for him on the north bank of the Orange, on free soil. They invited him to become Governor and Head Commandant of the Maatschappij.

So Retief rode into the main camp at the head of a cavalcade, men climbing on the waggon-tops to get a glimpse of him. At the ensuing mass meeting he was duly elected to his twin offices. He must now 'make the State'.

CHAPTER V

PIET RETIEF

I will not change my policy. I must make it all one and whether you, the fathers, are for me or against me, I know that your children will be with me.

CECIL RHODES

RETIEF knew that he could only 'make the State' permanently when he should have led the Maatschappij into the Promised Land, but he set to work to organise it in advance while the People were still in the wilderness.

It was going to be no light task. The Trekkers were scattered in five or six great camps from the Blesberg to Vet river. There were perhaps 2000 of them with others coming up from the Colony, and all of them, with so few exceptions that they made no impression on the mass, were frontier Afrikanders. There were differences within that frontier mass. Men from the dorps and from farms that had lain within easy reach of them differed in subtle ways of thought and action from comrades who had lived all their lives in the wilds. There were a few men of considerable wealth, either in stock or in money or in both. One man at least had 1000 golden guineas stowed in his waggon chests, and another was reputed to have ten times that amount. On the other hand, there were many so poor that they had not been able to trek without the help of richer neighbours, whose clients they had thus become. Gerrit Maritz had

helped many such from the parts around Graaff-Reinet. But the majority were men of substance sitting in their own waggons and beholden to no man.

In one respect at least the Trekkers were an easy folk to rule: they were not given to the graver crimes. But in other respects they were most difficult. They were pastoralists, folk of one single class, limited in their social experience to that class and lacking the variety that goes to the making of a well-balanced society. They were local in their conceptions, opinionated, and suspicious of each other and of everyone else. Nor had their latest memories of the Colony or their present precarious situation done anything to allay those suspicions.

Further, the Trekkers were politically inexperienced. Privilege they understood and kindly acts to friends and dependants in fullest measure, but not law nor even-handed justice without fear, favour or affection. None of them had had official training beyond the simple and leisurely duties of field-commandant or field-cornet, or of a member of a *kerkraad* or board of *heemraden*. Men who could write Dutch with ease and precision were rare among them. Above all, they were impatient of control even by their chosen leaders. Some of them were sons or grandsons of those Graaff-Reineters who had told the British at their first coming that they would only obey 'reasonable orders and regulations', the corollary being that they themselves were to be judges of the reasonableness.

In seeking to guide such a community Retief must rely on himself and such help as Maritz might give him. He had some advantages. The *Maatschappij* had invited him to be its leader. He was a man of fifty-seven, a good twelve years older than Potgieter and

nearly twenty years older than Maritz, still strong and active, and more experienced in the ways of the world than either of them. But there his advantages ended. He had no such personal following as they, no large party bound to him by ties of blood or religion or neighbourliness. He must play for the support of the middle mass of opinion and, if it came to the push, side with Maritz against Potgieter.

Retief meant to rule. In his manifesto published at the moment of his departure he had announced that he was resolved 'to make provision for the summary punishment of any traitors who may be found among us'. But first he must settle himself in the saddle.

That was not easy for he had made a grave mistake at the very outset. He, or was it the managing Maritz, had induced the mass meeting to give him both the offices of Governor and Head Commandant, and to confirm Maritz in his two offices of landdrost of the Court and *voorsitter* of the Volksraad. There was much to be said for entrusting to one man the civil and the military swords in a community which must remain on a war footing so long as it was trekking. There was convenience also in having one and the same man as chairman of the legislature and of the court of justice into which the legislature could transform itself without moving from the table. But it was not necessary and it was assuredly not wise. For it left Potgieter out in the cold: Potgieter, explorer of the Zoutpansberg and advocate of a Transvaal settlement, the hero of Vegkop, a strong man with a devoted following, the champion of the Doppers against the Orthodox ascendancy of Retief and Maritz.

On his arrival Retief had smoothed over the differences that had set Maritz and Potgieter by the ears.

But smoothing over settled nothing, as Retief soon found. Immediately after his election as Governor he tried to install Smit as predikant for the whole community. Such was 'the unedifying stir' in the crowded congregation that he had to desist.¹ It was only towards the close of May, after a month of anxious negotiation during which Cilliers tried to organise and Retief, albeit in his private capacity only, contributed towards a fund to bring up an ordained minister from the Colony, that Smit was installed without open opposition.

Meanwhile the laagers had moved northward slowly, most of them to the line of the Vet but some as far north as the Sand river. As they went through the winter cold they held meeting after meeting to debate the eternal trek politics: the immediate route, the ultimate goal, the wintering-place, care of the stock great and small, the personal differences that still estranged Potgieter and Maritz, and the purging of society of traitors.

This last and much more was provided for at a mass meeting held early in June on the banks of Vet river near the site of the future village of Winburg. There Smit, in a position now to administer an oath, swore in Retief and Maritz to their various offices and bound them and the whole community to obey Nine Articles of Association.² These were sufficiently stringent. First, 'the Reformed members' must publicly repudiate connection with 'all the missionary societies of England'. It may be that this prohibition was aimed principally at the London Missionary Society, which the Trekkers hated from old memories of the Black Circuit and more recent suspicions of Dr. John Philip and his satellites, who, they believed firmly, were trying to stir up the

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, ii, 94.

² *Ibid.*, i, 299.

armed and mounted Griquas against them. But it was certainly also a typical piece of *ad hoc* legislation aimed at the Rev. James Archbell. 'Archibald', the Remonstrant Wesleyan, as Smit called him, must be eliminated. Eliminated he hereby was.

More generalised legislation followed. All officials must be honoured and obeyed from the Governor in his Council of Policy downward, the new shape which the Thaba Nchu Leviathan was to take on when Retief should preside over it as civil governor. All those who would not accept these resolutions were to be excommunicated, to have no call upon the waggons or other equipment of the Maatschappij, and to lose their rights to land, hunting or other advantages in the Promised Land. New-comers and absentees from the meeting must take the oath forthwith unless they be prevented by sickness or other insuperable obstacle, under pain of being declared enemies of the People. As for open seceders, let them be anathema, and let them pay within two days all debts or suffer distraint to the value of those debts and costs.

And, lastly, the meeting chose a name for the Promised Land, presumably Natal. 'New Eden', suggested someone with a sense of romance; 'East Africa' was the more matter-of-fact proposal of another. But in the end it was the choice of Father Smit that carried the day: 'The Free Province of New Holland in South-East Africa'.¹ There was a good sentimental Netherlandish ring about that which appealed to men and women whose hearts were hot against England, but doubtless what appealed to them most forcibly was the insistence that the Province was to be free.

After the meeting Retief issued instructions to his

¹ *Voortrekkermense* (Smit), ii, 102.

six commandants and their field-cornets. Trekker society was bigger and more complex than it had been six months back, and thus called for some elaboration of the law. Retief knew his frontier and knew what had to be guarded against. Servants must be well treated. If any man molest native tribes or take Bushman or other native children by force, let him pay a fine; if he kill game unnecessarily, and that was already happening wholesale, or if he start or neglect to fight fires in the grass, grass often long enough to hide cattle and children as they strayed, let him pay once more. All without distinction must take their turn on sentry-go at night; patrols must go ahead of the trek columns and might shoot to kill if they must. But only so: there must be no shedding of innocent blood.

Meanwhile Retief made verbal treaties of amity with neighbouring great chiefs like Moshesh and Sikonyela, and with lesser men like the helpful Moroko, and even with little men like the leaders of the Caledon Korannas and mixed breeds. Doubtless the main point of these treaties was that the Trekkers were not to be molested on the land they held in the open plains. But it was certainly laid down that if either of the high contracting parties had a complaint against a subject of the other, enquiry should be made and the guilty person be compelled to make restitution. Quite a strong Stockenström flavour about that. No matter. The Volksraad duly confirmed Retief's treaties, as well as Potgieter's with Makwana, and decided that Msilikazi and his Matabele should be warned that a punitive expedition would come against them unless they restored the loot of Boer cattle, though what that loot was after the spoil of beasts and waggons taken at Mosega the Volksraad did not specify.

The projected expedition against the Matabele did

not materialise. Some say that fear of the Griquas prevented it, and Retief did indeed warn the two principal Griqua captains, Adam Kok of Philippolis and Andries Waterboer, who reigned farther west at Griquatown, that he knew of their alleged machinations. He asked them for their friendship and wrote also to his old friend Sir Benjamin D'Urban telling him of all that he was doing for the ordering of the Maatschappij, lamenting that 'almost all the native tribes' around had been stirred up to attack the Trekkers, and begging him to use his influence to stop it.¹ Even if there were nothing behind these reports of native hostility, a letter like that duly communicated to the frontier press made excellent propaganda. Retief might still have much to do to make the State, but he knew how to make the Great Trek.

The Griqua scare was groundless. Actually the projected expedition was frustrated by the furious quarrelling that broke out among the trek leaders. It began with the arrival of Piet Uys at headquarters in the middle of June. By the middle of September it had irremediably split 'the United Laagers'.

Piet Uys had been leader of the *kommissie trek* of 1834 that had journeyed to Natal, and had marked that fair land as his own. He had now left Uitenhage in April 1837 with a family party of 100 souls and more, all related to the patriarch Jacobus Uys, who sat upon his waggon cherishing the great inscribed copy of the Bible which the good Grahamstown folk had given him as his trek passed through their town. But though Jacobus might be nominal head of the Uys trek, his son Piet was the real leader. A younger man than any of the other Trek leaders, short and thick-set, blond and

¹ G. S. Preller, *Piet Retief*, pp. 131 ff.

shaggy-bearded, Piet was pleasant enough in ordinary intercourse, but he was apt to go like a bull at a gate in peace and in war, and had a poor opinion of the competence of his seniors.¹

Piet Uys left his main trek at the Orange river drifts and rode on ahead. He reached headquarters a few days after the Nine Articles had been adopted, articles which he and his must accept if they would enter the Promised Land, but articles in whose framing they had had no voice. Further, all the talk of the Retiefs and Maritzes was of Natal as the goal of their endeavours, Natal which every good Uys regarded as the family preserve. And Piet, like Potgieter, realised that there was no place left for him in the supreme governance of the future republic. He therefore plunged wholeheartedly into the stormy politics of the United Laagers.

Stormy enough. In that last week of June, there were three big meetings and three big quarrels, all culminating in a general set-to between Maritz and Uys. Well might Father Smit see possibilities for his next sermon in a text from Numbers whose significance he had never yet noted, how that 'when the people complained . . . the Lord heard of it . . . and the fire of the Lord burnt among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp'. But Uys did not wait for the discourse. He rode off to take counsel with his own people in the south.

At the back of all these bickerings was one burning question: Did the Canaan towards which the United Laagers were marching lie beyond the Vaal to the north, or down over the Drakensberg to the south-east in Natal? It was a choice between the High Veld and the coast belt.

Few of the Trekkers desired to stay where they were. The north-eastern Free State was delightful enough

¹ *Voortrekker-mense*, i, 266.

by day in the winter sunshine: clear blue skies, pure air and the sense of boundless space and no hurry that went to the hearts of pastoral men. But there was a chill in the shadows and, as the sun sank, biting cold swooped down on man and beast. Folk from the northern districts of the Colony were more or less used to that, but those from the southerly parts felt it. The women complained bitterly of pains caused by the ice-cold water in which they must do the family washing. There was snow on the high ground eastward, and on the plains the wind blew fierce and circling widdershins. Later on came lightning that flickered without ceasing, ghastly mauve and palest blue, so that men could look into each other's startled eyes. And through it all such thunder as Colonists had never heard, clanging, clattering peals like blows of Thor's hammer, many-echoed. Last, hail and drenching rain that drove through tents and bucksails and sent everyone scampering with their soaked bedding into the cramped shelter of the waggons. There was fever in the camps that winter. Poor Erasmus Smit watched his son die, 'mijn Salomon' who had trekked with his parents while his elder brother had remained among the flesh-pots. And he was not the only one who watched thus hopelessly.

Quite apart from the fact that this Free State *kaal-veld* (bald veld) was inhospitable and perhaps too close to the Cape Colony and its British rulers for safety, the Trekkers were convinced that better things awaited them farther on. The Potgieters were determined to seek these in the Transvaal. Just beyond the upper and middle reaches of the Vaal, they knew, were excellent grass-lands rising up into ridges, Gatsrand, Suikerbosrand, Witwatersrand, its gold all unsuspected, full of perennial springs. There men could run cattle and sheep

as well as in the Free State and, in addition, grow corn and tobacco and peaches without undue labour or anxiety except the fear of early frosts. Beyond the hills and hollows in which Pretoria was one day to hide, the ground fell away lower and hotter and bush took the place of the grass. But even that was possible country, while all along its eastern margin was good high ground as far north as the Zoutpansberg.

From the political point of view also this Transvaal had overwhelming advantages over Natal. Natal was within reach of England's ships. There were already a few British inhabitants at the Port who might cause complications. There was a rumour, a true one this time as it proved, that a British magistrate had been sent thither. The Transvaal, on the other hand, was well out of reach of ships and troops, and its northern half lay beyond the limits of the Punishment Act and thus beyond the shadow of a shade of British jurisdiction. Nor was Port Natal the only outlet to the open sea, if such were desired. The country between the Drakensberg and Portuguese Sofala and Inhambane and Delagoa Bay was said to be hot and unhealthy, but it would be hard if men who knew how to trek could not make their way to one or other of those harbours.

Of course, there was Msilikazi, but the Potgieters felt confident that they could deal justly with him.

The Trekkers knew much less at first-hand of Natal, the alternative Canaan, but from all accounts it was a Trekkers' paradise. Tales of its beauties had gone round the eastern districts when Colonial traders had come home, or some of the Port Natal ivory hunters had found their way to Port Elizabeth or Grahamstown. The Wesleyan missionaries, whose farthestmost station was close to the Natal frontier, had also spoken of it

admiringly, while Piet Uys and his *kommissie* had come home thence in 1834 incoherent with enthusiasm. Natal was said to be a lovely country: good grass, good water, plentiful firewood and timber for building, no fever, no frosts except possibly in the foothills of the mountains, fine rains, the bulk of it apparently uninhabited but its borders lined with native kraals that promised a sufficiency of labour. Dingaan and his Zulu impis might be dangerous; but they lay behind the Tugela river to the north of Natal. They had never really molested the British at the Port; with them a plan could be made. And once that had been done and a similar arrangement effected with the British traders, Port Natal would furnish the Maatschappij with an ideal point of contact with the outer world, a point of vantage from which to bargain with the Imperial authorities for a *de jure* recognition of *de facto* independence.

Piet Retief was determined to go down into Natal. He knew it was accessible, for whereas the Potgieters had failed to find a way down the mountains to the Portuguese coast, a *kommissie* had just discovered no less than five practicable passes into Natal. He could reckon that Maritz and Uys would take the Natal road and he hoped the rest would do so too. He therefore set off slowly along the valley of the Sand river with the other treks moving hesitatingly in his tracks; the Maritzes first, the Potgieters far behind casting longing eyes at the Vaal drifts, and the Uyses still farther to the south wending their way up the Caledon valley.

The burden of governorship lay heavily on Retief's shoulders. He had to carry poor Erasmus Smit on his back and got little enough help from the congregation. Some of them had persuaded themselves that Smit's appointment had been for a year at most, and hardly

any of them would contribute to his maintenance. They had been ruined by the Kaffirs, they said, and so could not afford it.

Retief even had words with Maritz, his chief hope and stay, over the minister. Smit, with a sound Erastian regard for the civil power and a shrewd belief that he had more to hope from Retief than even from his own brother-in-law, deserted the Maritz laager and attached himself and the waggon Maritz had lent him to the headquarters trek. Maritz demanded his waggon back, and it took all Retief's tact and Susanna Smit's vehemence to induce him to forgo the claim.

As if that were not enough, Retief had to spend much time and labour in patching up Maritz's quarrels with rival leaders. He succeeded for the moment and was greeted on his return to camp by *feux de joie* and exultant shouts of 'Peace, peace all round'. But there was no peace. Within three days the Potgieters were at him with all their old objections to the Natal adventure, and Maritz himself, his resolution shaken, had swerved northward towards the Vaal.

Retief managed to win Maritz back to his allegiance, and the Great Trek moved on again in the general direction of the Drakensberg. It was barren country, so barren that many cattle fell out by the way and the travellers must burn dried hartebeest dung for fuel if they could get that. There were abandoned native kraals in all directions that told their grim story, and lions were more troublesome than they had been hitherto; but, for all that, there were clans living a little off the track, whose women came in frequently with corn and mealies and honey for barter.

And then, towards the close of August, the blow fell. Piet Uys and his people announced that they would

have nothing more to do with the United Laagers as at present constituted.¹ They proposed indeed to acquire Port Natal and such adjoining land as might be necessary and to establish there a settlement based 'on the same principles of liberty as those adopted by the United States of America'. While still in the wilderness, they proposed to regulate themselves 'by the old burgher rights and duties', to submit to none of Retief's or Maritz's legislation, which was simply calculated to reduce them from a 'state of banishment to a state of slavery', and to look forward to a general meeting at the end of their wanderings which should see to the election of 'chief rulers and the framing of proper laws' whereunder the people might be godly and quietly governed.

That ultimatum gave Retief a week of hard riding from laager to laager, pleading, exhorting, commanding. The United Laagers must be held together at all costs, else how could the Maatschappij face Dingaan in whose gift Natal lay? Division must breed lawlessness and the breach of all the rules that had been laid down for the conduct of the Trek, the reassurance of the chiefs, and the comfort of the distant Cape Governor. Confusion would be worse confounded as the number of trek parties grew, and they were growing fast. A column of thirty waggons was close at hand; hard on its heels were sixty-two families from Baviaan's River; behind that again was a large party from Beaufort, many of whose members were of families whose heads had been banished thither after the Slachter's Nek rebellion, and behind them once more was the deacon of the church at Olifants Hoek, Smit's old home, at the head of fifty

¹ G. M. Theal, *Historical Sketches*, p. 283; *Voortrekkermentse* (Smit), ii, 125.

fighting men and sixty waggons. When all should have come in there would be not far short of 4000 souls in the Maatschappij.

Retief persuaded the jealous leaders to bring their men in to a mass meeting at Tafelkop in the middle of September to decide finally on the destination of the Great Trek. In they rode to headquarters on the appointed day, and at once, as Smit has recorded, the air was full of 'new lies, slandering our laager, our conduct and our regulations'. Next day it was no better; men shouted and stormed and flourished their guns, Retiefs and Maritzes on the one side, Potgieters and Uyses on the other, Government *versus* Opposition. Mercifully no one pulled a trigger and towards the close the tumult died down. At the end of it all Piet Uys flung out. 'Where are we going?' someone asked him. 'Each is going his own way', he growled in reply, 'one forward, the next aside, but none following'.¹

The recalcitrants rode away and headquarters assembled for evening prayer. A prominent burgher relieved the communal feelings by expounding Psalm 109, King David's commination service.² No need for exposition; every barbed verse of that Hymn of Hate would find its billet in the backs of the retreating opposition and its gaunt leader. If Potgieter chose to go a-whoring after the high places of the Transvaal, then 'Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. . . . Let the extortioner catch all that he hath . . . Let there be none to extend mercy unto him . . . But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake, because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me . . .'

¹ *Voortrekkermense* (Smit), ii, 129.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 129.

The strong voice ceased. It was the end. Never again was the Great Trek to appear as a unity.

The United Laagers might be united no longer, but Retief was determined to push on and let who would follow him. Sending a party ahead to occupy the outlet of the chosen pass, he moved on steadily over the black and burned-off veld. As he marched his train dwindled ominously. The faint-hearted and the undecided hung back to see which way the main trek was after all to go, and when at length Retief pitched camp within reach of the nek, only twenty waggons followed his.

It was beautiful on this last stretch of the High Veld whose edge is the mighty wall of the Drakensberg that overhangs Natal. Here were great kopjes and boulders and pinnacles of rock with grass and plentiful water between and, since it was October, flowers everywhere. Retief and the lasses delighted to gather them, especially the big red ones they had never seen before. Suddenly, at a bend in the track, there was nothing ahead; a little farther still and the panorama of west central Natal opened out hundreds of feet below. The mountain-side dropped downward in great rounded knees and jagged rocky krantzies, while below, green, blue, and grey in the last distance, was a tumbled sea of rounded hills that faded out in the haze of the horizon.

The omens were not altogether favourable. The outpost at the nek reported that fifty of Sikonyela's men, mounted, armed with guns, and clothed more or less like white men, had ridden up the slopes with cattle, sheep and horses looted from the Zulus. Not a happy introduction to the country that Dingaan claimed. However, stragglers had come in till the headquarters

camp could once more boast fifty waggons. It could be left safely. Retief went down the pass with fifteen men and four waggons.

Retief's party got down the slope with some difficulty, a little to the west of Van Reenen's pass over which the road and railway run to-day. They waited a day or two at the bottom hoping that Maritz would join them; for even after the *débâcle* at Tafelkop, Retief had discussed this expedition with him and Potgieter. But Maritz did not come and, fearing that he might have ruined everything by riding direct into Zululand on his own account, Retief hurried off on his 200-mile journey to Port Natal, through which lay the only safe road to Dingaan's great place.

The *kommissie* rode on across the topmost of Natal's three terraces, bracken and tufty grass on the hill-tops, and dense forest in the ravines. Below the 4000-foot line the thornveld of the central terrace began, great rounded downs, fresh and green, dotted with thorn-bushes singly or in clumps and tall aloes with grey-green fleshy leaves and flowers like fifty-branched candlesticks. In the valleys streams rushed muddy-brown after the early rains, all winding, winding as streams and roads must wind in such a country down towards the kindly sea.

Beautiful, and fine farming country too; red and yellow clay sheep-runs on the heights and black loam for the plough in the bottoms. Early in the morning it was cool, dew everywhere, but by nine o'clock it was hot in the valleys even in this early summer. During the last two days' ride across the third, the sub-tropical terrace of Natal, there could be no doubt about the heat. Here, in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, the land was more gently tumbled than ever; palms flourished and strange,

soft fruits, wild bananas and paw-paws. There were thorny acacias everywhere. In the hollows towered great dark-leaved trees, stinkwood and assegai wood, the lovely tambuti hard as ebony, and majestic yellow-woods nearly twenty feet round at the base all interlaced with creepers.

At last the blue line of the sea showed through a gap in the hills. Cornfields and kraals of beehive huts set round with thorn-bush palisades broke the alternating monotony of bush and forest and grass high as a man's head, and then the huts of the English on the very edge of the landlocked lagoon set with islets that was Port Natal. A lovely land and the best harbour on all the coast from Table to Delagoa Bay. Here surely was journey's end.

Dingaan, king of the Zulus, lived with his warriors on the far side of the Tugela river, but he claimed all Natal. It was part of the empty region which his predecessors had created and which he maintained around his kingdom. In 1824 his immediate predecessor, Chaka, had granted Port Natal and a large block of territory round it to two Englishmen. And since Bantu law knew nothing of an out-and-out alienation of the land on which the life of the tribe depended, but merely the grant of hunting, grazing and such other privileges as might cover the use of whatever had its being on that land, Chaka had not felt himself precluded from 'granting' this area to others subsequently. Nor would Dingaan be debarred from doing likewise.

British ivory-hunters and traders had gradually drifted into the Port. Somewhat to both kings' annoyance, they had allowed survivors of Zulu conquering raids and even runaways from Zululand to seek shelter at the Port or in the bush-clad coasts on either side of

it. In spite of this the Englishmen had as a rule lived on good terms with both Chaka and Dingaan, and had even helped them with their guns on occasion against obstinate and inaccessible enemies.

For some years prior to Retief's arrival the Cape and even the Whitehall authorities had flirted with the idea of annexing the Port or at any rate of extending some sort of official control over it to check the sale of fire-arms to the tribes by Portuguese and Americans, to forestall a possible Yankee annexation, to secure a valuable base of operations in the rear of the frontier tribes that pressed upon the Colony's eastern frontier or, alternatively, to check any pressure from behind that might drive those tribes into the Colony. All that had happened by the middle of 1835 was that Captain Allen Gardiner, late of the Royal Navy and now a missionary in the service of the Church Missionary Society, had gone thither on his own account. He had failed to persuade Dingaan to receive a missionary at his great place, but he had secured assurances from the King which encouraged him to persuade the settlers, at a mass meeting of fifteen souls all told, to found the town of Durban on 'an eligible and commodious site' and to petition the authorities to organise the surrounding territory of Victoria as a British colony.¹

This time the Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, had supported the proposal. It fitted into the general frontier settlement he was making after his Kaffir war and would forestall troubles that might arise from the recent arrival of American missionaries in Zululand. The Secretary of State, however, would not hear of it. The most

¹ J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i, 307. Some of the documents published in Bird's *Annals* are also to be found in J. C. Chase's *Natal Papers*, i-ii (1843). Chase also gives many documents dealing with the Eastern Frontier and Transorangia.

he would sanction was that Gardiner should go back to the Port without money, arms or so much as a solitary policeman, to keep order as a magistrate under the new Punishment Act.

Port Natal, which Gardiner essayed to rule thus with his hands tied, was a squalid little place. There was one stone building and another of wood, both of them stores of rival Eastern Province merchants. The forty European inhabitants and their few coloured neighbours were content with rude hovels or downright native huts. Gardiner himself lived in just such a hut on the Berea ridge at the back of the Bay overlooking the bush, the kraals, and the alternate stretches of tidal water or of rich grey mud. His authority over the Europeans amounted to very little. No one would serve as constable. Presently they began to complain that he was hampering their trade with the Zulus. His hold over the 3000 or 4000 local natives, pure Bantu or the mixed progeny of coloured and Zulu or European and Zulu, was even less, for they recognised the leading white men as their chiefs and sometimes as fathers also. How should it not be so? There were no white women. Many of the traders and hunters had native wives, some of them more than one, and with them they lived more or less in native style clothed in a queer mixture of European and Bantu costume.

Two successes Gardiner had been able to achieve. He had persuaded Dingaan to receive the Rev. Francis Owen as missionary at his capital, and also to cede the southern half of Natal and its vital port to the Queen. The news of that treaty precipitated a crisis. The great majority of the settlers claimed that theirs was 'a free settlement' and repudiated Gardiner and all his works. It was into the midst of this confusion that Retief and his companions rode.

Gardiner greeted Retief civilly, however much he may have dreaded an alliance between two groups of British subjects who had repudiated their allegiance. The anti-Gardiner section of the little community, headed by Alexander Biggar, leading inhabitant, and gigantic John Cane, ex-labourer, ex-storeman, ex-carpenter and presently chief of a native clan, welcomed him warmly and even expressed the hope that they might one day be able to receive the Trekkers 'as friends and, perhaps, in the course of events as neighbours'.

It was in these promising circumstances that Retief opened negotiations with Dingaan.¹ He did so with circumspection, for he had heard disquieting reports from Zululand. He knew that the King would not readily recognise as a friend anyone who came from the direction of Msilikazi's country as he and his followers must come, and he feared that he would blame him for Sikonyela's theft of the royal cattle, since the robbers had ridden past his camp in the high mountains. He therefore wrote asking for an interview, seeking to dispel any suspicions that might lurk in Dingaan's mind, and explaining that the Boers had beaten the Matabele at Mosega earlier in the year simply because they had stolen Trekker cattle.

Retief's next move was not so statesmanlike. Without waiting for a reply from Dingaan, he set out with his friends and John Cane and young Thomas Halstead, one of the original settlers, who spoke Zulu as to the manner born. They parked the waggons near the mouth of the Tugela, and Retief with the two Englishmen and four or five of his followers set out on horseback

¹ On Retief's dealings with Dingaan till February 1838, *vide The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen* (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 7); *Annals*, i, 198 ff. 232, 328 ff.; *Voortrekkermense*, i, 147 ff; G. S. Preller, *Retief*, pp. 148 ff.

for the twenty-hour ride along the track that led to Dingaan's capital, Umgungundhlovu.

Dingaan received his visitors ceremoniously for all that he had not expected them so soon. Probably for that reason he would not talk business for the first day or two. Tall, fat, dignified, clad in gorgeous robes of red and white and black, he presided over war-dances of warriors, in which trained oxen took part whose beauty went to the hearts of Retief and his men. 'We are as hard as stones,' the warriors chanted, 'nothing shall hurt us'.

There was thus plenty of time for the visitors to take in the wonders of Umgungundhlovu. It lay on a gentle slope above a stream, a huge oval kraal fenced with bushes interwoven, a good half-hour's walk round. Within, packed close to this outer wall, were perhaps a thousand beehive huts in concentric rings, six deep in places. Here and there huts stood high on piles in which the royal shields were kept out of reach of the white ants. Part of the great oval space within the rings of huts was fenced off as the cattle kraal, the hub of Bantu life, and part again at the upper end was marked off as the royal enclosure. There, on the highest ground, dwelt the multitudinous wives and concubines of the King, each in her own hut close to the palace. The palace itself was a hut indeed but a majestic one twenty feet high, its roof inside plaited as finely as a basket, its stout pillars closely overlaid with beads, and its earthen floor shining dark from the daily rubbing with fat.

At last Dingaan seated himself on his throne, an old-fashioned arm-chair, at the gate of the cattle kraal. There he and Retief soon came to terms. It came to this: once Retief had handed over to the King the cattle stolen by

Sikonyela 'and if possible the thief as well', then Dingaan would give land to the Trekkers. After some debate Dingaan signed a letter to that effect and Retief set off for the Port and home.

Retief was in high feather. On the way to the Port he stopped to dine with one of the American missionaries and told him all that he had done and meant to do, how that the Sikonyela business should not take long and that then he would go in with a fair-sized commando to receive his reward. The good American begged him not to go near the King with a commando, but Retief replied that he understood Kaffirs. It took an Afrikander to do that and not an Englishman. When the missionary retorted that the Zulus were not like the eastern frontier Kaffirs and that, in any event, he himself was an American, Retief laughed and said that that was as near an Englishman as made no difference.¹ So he went on his way warned but unconvinced, for who would take advice on such matters from an overseas missionary?

Arrived at the Port, Retief sent off two of his comrades on horseback to tell the waiting laager on the mountain-tops that all was well. He also discussed the future with the British residents. He promised them special consideration in the matter of land-grants, but reminded them that, since the Boers would be in the overwhelming majority, Natal would have to be ruled in Boer fashion. Then, still haunted by the suspicions that had hag-ridden the Trekkers since they had quitted the Colony, he wrote once more to Dingaan begging him to pay no heed to anything that he might hear against the Boers and dilating with some exaggeration on Msilikazi's defeat at Mosega. The

¹ *Owen's Diary* (Van Riebeeck Society, No. 7), p. 157.

missionaries, he concluded, would show the King from the Bible what happened to wicked kings; for his part, he did not believe Msilikazi had long to live. Having thus countersigned his own death warrant, he and the remainder of his party set out on their long uphill climb, through Natal, home.

While Retief had been thus busy in Natal and Zululand, the headquarters camp had waited in trepidation. There were alarms that hostile natives were coming at a time when many of the men had gone hunting and others were refusing to draw their waggons into the waggon-ring. Lions plagued them, though their fierce, half-wild dogs accounted for one or two. Then a mountain thunderstorm drove them out of their pleasant valley to a higher spot nearer the pass. Once there was a dreadful rumour that the Governor and his party had been murdered beyond the Tugela. But at last, on 11 November, in rode Retief's messengers, coming, like Cato from Carthage, with ripe fruit from the tropical coast-belt. The camp exploded with joy and excitement. Retief's daughter triumphantly inscribed her father's name in green paint on a prominent rock, and Erasmus Smit at prayers that day read out his favourite psalm, 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion . . .', preached from another psalm as a text, and in his enthusiasm expounded yet three psalms more. Then, in defiance of Retief's orders to stand fast till his return, they inspanned and made haste down the mountain slopes into the still only half-promised land.

During their long wait some of the men had cleared the road to the pass down which Retief had gone. Within three days of the receipt of the good news from the Port, eighteen of the headquarters waggons had

gone down safely. A few days later, so fast did the tidings spread, waggons from all directions were converging on this and other practicable passes a little further north. All that week and the next, they poured down into Natal: Retiefs, Maritzes and even some of the Potgieters. Sometimes 100 waggons went down in a day following one another close, baggage and chests lashed fast and hind wheels skidded, the two *agterosse*, old and tried beasts, harnessed alone to the waggon to keep it moving, and men holding on to thongs fastened to the sides to prevent the waggons toppling over. Some did crash, but not many, for the drivers were expert and the oxen steady. But folk in horse-waggons had an anxious time with their less patient and surefooted animals. Women and children must walk down, while old women and the sick were carried in waggon-beds with friends walking alongside to fan away the flies and ward off the pitiless sun. So they went down exulting. When Retief rejoined them at the end of November, there were close on a thousand waggons spread out along the streams that run into the upper Tugela.

But there were one or two who did not rejoice unreservedly. One old Boer, looking out from the high passes at the shadows of the Drakensberg which the westering sun sent sweeping out over the hills and valleys below, sighed and muttered, 'Woe to the land that has shadows on its borders'.¹

Woe, indeed. What the Trekkers were doing was natural. After their long spell on the bleak *kaalveld*, they, and still more their wives, wanted farms beneath their feet and solid roofs over their heads. They took the shortest road to those desired ends and found it the

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, iii, 138.

longest way home. Here they were before ever their Governor could reach them, long before he could fulfil his contract with Dingaan, 'coming like an army from the direction of Msilikazi, to build houses' in the Zulu country. It was a fatal course, the most sure and certain way of raising the devils of suspicion and enmity in the heart of Dingaan. And Dingaan was a slayer.

If anything over and above this abrupt invasion of Natal had been needed to raise those devils in the Zulu king, it was the fate that, in this same month of November, had overtaken his brother monarch and dearest enemy, Msilikazi. Left to themselves on the High Veld after the disastrous meeting at Tafelkop, Potgieter and Uys had sent a party north to examine the possibilities of the Zoutpansberg. That much they had done with Retief's consent, but all else they did was without even his knowledge. Uys, with a lordly disdain of Retief's treaties, negotiated treaties with some of the Caledon Valley chiefs on his own account, and then, reinforced by newcomers from the Colony, joined Potgieter in the oft-postponed punitive expedition against the Matabele.¹

There were 135 mounted men in this expedition, in two companies since neither captain could be expected to serve under the other, and a few score Barolong again to drive the captured cattle. They left their waggons in the Marico valley and engaged the enemy fifty miles farther on near Msilikazi's capital of Kapain. They did not find the King himself, but they defeated the Matabele in a nine days' running fight without losing a man or a horse.

The spoil of the battle of Marico was much more

¹ *Annals*, i, 240; *Voortrekkermense*, iii, 23, 45.

than the 7000 head of captured cattle. It was nothing less than all Msilikazi's country. At the end of the fight the commandos saw the Matabele streaming away northwards. The year 1837 had been a bad year for Msilikazi. Potgieter and Maritz had defeated some of his best men at the New Year. Six months later Dingaan's impis had come upon him, and though he had held them, they had cut to pieces more than one of his best regiments. Now, in November, Potgieter and Uys had driven his men the length of the Marico valley. There must be magic in it, for not one of the *Amaboela* had been so much as hurt. Msilikazi went north and cleared a new habitation for himself in what is now Southern Rhodesia. He thus left Potgieter to claim by right of conquest all the open country north of Vaal river from the mountains of the east to the Kalahari desert on the west. Well satisfied, Potgieter established himself on the Suikerbosrand just north of the Vaal, close to where the town of Heidelberg now stands, while Uys rejoined his people in the territory south of the river on the road to the mountains and the coast. Retief might win Natal, though Uys could be trusted to have something to say on that head, but Potgieter held the High Veld.

News of this overwhelming victory did not reach the Trekkers encamped in Natal at once. They were busy with their own concerns. Retief had come back to them, and the Natal natives whom he had brought from the Port had eased the labour shortage. Further, Retief was making some progress in the ordering of both Church and State. Smit had the satisfaction of christening the first young burgher to be born on the soil of 'New Holland', and then of presiding over the first duly constituted Trekker kerkraad: two elders, two deacons, and

the Governor himself as Political Commissioner in good old Cape fashion. Provision was made for the celebration of Nagmaal every three months, and the troublesome question of Smit's stipend was disposed of. Whether it could be translated into fact was another matter, for though the Boers would do much and give much in kind to their 'teaching priest', on whose deserts Smit preached eloquently, they did not part readily from their hard cash. Truth to tell they had not overmuch to part from and no certainty that they would ever be able to replenish their store in the wilderness. As it was, men grumbled at the fee for a christening or a wedding or a funeral, and church collections and contributions to the poor-box ranged regrettably low. But at least the amount of the minister's stipend was fixed at £37:10s. a year.

In matters temporal, a calm followed the storm. A few days before Christmas, Andries Pretorius of Graaff-Reinet and a few friends drove in with authentic news of the Marico campaign in which they had served as volunteers. But with them, to the perturbation of headquarters, came the redoubtable Piet Uys with his Caledon valley treaties, his share of the glories of Marico and his claim to first place in Natal. However, Maritz soon arrived to strengthen the Governor's hands and out of evil good came. At this crisis in the fate of the Maatschappij and in the presence of the distinguished visitors from Graaff-Reinet, Maritz and Uys shook hands, and Uys promised Retief that he would take the oath to the constitution of the United Laagers as soon as he should have brought his trek down from the High Veld.

Having witnessed the burying of the hatchet, Pretorius and his party drove on in their horse-waggons to

Port Natal and thence back to the Colony by the Kaffir-land road, greatly impressed by what they had seen of Natal. Retief, for his part, transmitted to Dingaan with suitable comments the news of Msilikazi's overthrow, and then, to the roar of muskets and the boom of the stout old cannon, moved off against Sikonyela with fifty burghers and ten of Dingaan's Zulus to take delivery of the royal cattle.

The Sikonyela patrol soon finished its business. Retief lured Sikonyela into his camp on the plea of discussing the right of way through his territory and suffered one of his followers to handcuff him by a trick, by magic the watchful Zulus must have believed. He held him prisoner till he had handed over 700 head of cattle and all his guns and horses.¹

The Zulus took charge of their cattle and Retief rode home in triumph to auction the rest of the spoil and to take up his peck of troubles once more. Smit was in difficulties, as he usually was when the Governor's back was turned, for Sarel Cilliers had not been able to resist the temptation to preach without consulting predikant or kerkraad. The trouble was smoothed over and then Retief realised with anxiety that, during his absence, the Trekkers had been scattering. He had fixed his camp at Dorenkop between the present Chieveley and Colenso² and had ordered that no one was to go east beyond it. But it was never easy for the Boers to remain close together for any length of time. Grazing and firewood soon ran short if they did. Retief now found hunters chasing eland far away to the north in the Biggarsberg beyond the upper Tugela, and little trek parties encamped out beyond his own laager in the direction of Zululand. If his followers were scattering

¹ *Annals*, i, 369.

² G. S. Preller, *Piet Retief*, p. 291.

in this fashion, all the more reason for coming to terms with Dingaan quickly.

A council was held at the Dorenkop camp to make the final arrangements. It is impossible to say how far Retief was easy in his mind, but it is quite certain that Maritz, Cilliers and other leaders were very uneasy. One or two traders had found their way to the laager with welcome goods at most unwelcome prices. One of these men had come up from the Port, and he said that Dingaan meant mischief. Further, a half-breed son of old Alexander Biggar of Port Natal was actually serving Retief as interpreter, and he had had a warning message from his father. The council therefore tried to dissuade Retief from going in person. Maritz, to his lasting honour, even offered to go instead, since his death would not matter so much as the Governor's. But Retief made up his mind that he must go. He was leader and he must lead; he must do nothing that would cause the King to distrust him. He called for volunteers. Some seventy stepped forward. With these and Thomas Halstead as interpreter and thirty coloured grooms, Retief rode away towards the Tugela and Umgungundhlovu. It was the last the Trekkers ever saw of him or any of his companions.

Had the Boers known one-half of what was passing in Zululand or one tithe of what was passing in Dingaan's mind, they would never have let Retief go in. The Zulu king was by nature cunning, and, as successor of Chaka, a killer *ex officio*. He had long been mortally afraid of the *Amaboela*, the great company of men armed with guns and mounted on 'hornless cattle' that had gradually drawn nearer and nearer to his dominions, overawing the High Veld chieftains and making all the valour of the Matabele of none effect. At last its van-

guard had stood upon the mountains that overlooked Natal, threatening his power and his land, his people and their way of life. Dingaan resolved to deal with it in his own way, to play the fox first and then the lion. When all is said and done, he was a Zulu patriot.

Retief had come to Umgungundhlovu the first time sooner than he had been expected. Dingaan, who already knew of Msilikazi's first defeat, had then given orders that he and his should be killed on their way back to Port Natal. For whatever reason the induna to whom the command had been given had not carried it out, but had fled for his life towards Natal with 600 of his people. Their pursuers had caught them at the Tugela drifts and slain them all except the induna himself and a handful of followers. These had made their way to the Port and safety.

Dingaan was furious and alarmed. He had had a few guns for some time past, but had preferred to rely on the well-tried stabbing assegai, and only to have recourse to these unfamiliar weapons in the last resort. But now he had begun to badger his missionary into teaching him 'that which he most wanted to know', the use of this infallible artillery, and had been angry when poor Owen had refused.¹

Dingaan's alarm and fury had been redoubled when he received the letter in which Retief told him of Msilikazi's first defeat at the hands of the *Amaboela* and referred him to his missionary and the Bible for God's handling of wicked kings.

Such had been Dingaan's anger at his induna's defection that Owen had feared for the lives of his family and himself, while down at the Port the English had taken to the bush and Gardiner had been convinced

¹ *Annals*, i, 335.

that the King meant to make a clean sweep of the white folk, Boer, British and American. In the end Dingaan had passed the matter off, but after his receipt of Retief's second letter he had redoubled his efforts to master the mysteries of firearms, and sat for hours at a time while his warriors danced before him and intoned, 'Who can fight with thee? No king can fight with thee. They that carry firearms cannot fight with thee.'¹

Whatever comfort Dingaan may have drawn from the harping of these young Davids on that refrain had been dispelled by Retief's letter announcing Msilikazi's final overthrow. Hard on the heels of that alarming news had come tidings of how Retief had stripped Sikonyela of his guns and horses without a shot fired, and then Retief's refusal to let him, Dingaan, have either guns or horses. Dingaan had stormed. He meant to have them. Already he had had Owen's waggons searched for weapons. What were cattle beside these things that could unmake kings? Unless he were given them the Boers should have no land.

A day or two later Dingaan learned that Retief was on his way to Umgungundhlovu. He made ready. He brought in reinforcements till fully 3000 warriors lay hidden in the rings of huts that lined his great palisade. Next day, to the sound of musket shots, Retief and his 100 men rode up and camped hard by the main gate.

Already a Zulu had shouted across the Tugela to native servants of the Trekkers the news of the massacre that was so soon to take place.²

The King received his victims friendly-wise. His warriors danced in their honour, and the Boers at his request 'danced' on their horses and fired their long guns. After that convincing display, Dingaan made one

¹ *Annals*, i, 334, 342.

² *Voortrektermense* (Smit), ii, 172.

more effort to persuade Retief to give him Sikonyela's guns and horses, and once more Retief refused.

The following day, a Sunday, was filled with negotiations. Apparently there was some hitch, for in the evening Dingaan sent to fetch an interpreter from one of the American mission stations, grumbling that he could not understand the Boers. Other messengers must have gone out that Sunday night. Retief's force was a formidable one, of much the same strength as the Mosega commando and three-fourths of that which had routed the Matabele on the Marico. The King meant to make sure. On the Monday a fresh regiment marched into the great place and came out presently dancing and beating their shields. So Potgieter had seen the Matabele beat their shields before the onslaught at Vegkop.

An English lad, who was loosely attached to Owen's establishment and who spoke Zulu well, warned one or two of the Boers to be on their guard; and Owen, knowing nothing and fearing much, displayed his anxiety openly to others. The Boers only smiled, as their leader had smiled to the American missionary a while back, and told them that all would be well, the King's heart was good.

On the morrow, Tuesday, 6 February, Dingaan signed a deed granting to 'the dutch Emigrant South Afrikans' all the wide lands from the Tugela to the Umzimvubu river in payment for services rendered. Having thus convinced them that his heart was indeed good, he invited them unarmed into the great central kraal to drink a parting draught of beer. They came, and as the warriors danced and the stirrup-cup went round, Dingaan rose to his feet, bulky and menacing, and roared, 'Kill the wizards'. At that the dancers and the warriors hidden in the huts poured down upon the

defenceless Boers. They dragged them to the hill of execution over which the royal vultures hovered and swooped without ceasing, and there beat their brains out. Others slew the coloured retainers at the gate.

And, forthwith, company after company dashed westward, plumes tossing, shields brandished, assegais flashing, to fall upon the scattered and unsuspecting Boer encampments in Natal.

CHAPTER VI

BLAAUWKRANS, BLOOD RIVER AND THE ZULU BATTLE

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children. . . . MATT. II, 18

And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it. . . .

EXODUS XVII, 13, 14

And the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host, and the host fled. . . .

JUDGES VII, 20, 22

THE Trekkers in Natal were encamped in a countryside watered by the many streams, Little Tugela, Blaauwkrans, Bushmans and Mooi, that run from the south into the upper reaches of the Tugela river. Gerrit Maritz, in supreme command during Retief's absence, lay near the Bushmans river, Retief's own people were farther north some way back from the Blaauwkrans, and one or two considerable encampments lay still nearer to the mountains. But most of the Maatschappij was dispersed in little groups over an area of forty miles by twenty-five, some of them far down the Blaauwkrans and others well on the Zululand side of the Bushmans river. It was upon these exposed encampments that the Zulus burst at one o'clock on a moonless night along a front of twenty miles.

There were only three Zulu regiments engaged, for their expected reinforcements never came up. But they did great execution. They wiped out Liebenbergs

and Prinsloos and many Bezuidenhouts in their open camps, and beat down the Bothmas' defences in the grey dawn by driving their own cattle in upon them and following up fast.

The Boers farther back, hearing the first shots, concluded that it must be Retief come back from Zululand. But when the distant fusillade persisted and then grew nearer, they stood to arms. Stragglers began to drop in: a Bushman servant, a wounded lad riding one horse with his braces knotted together for a bridle and driving seven others, then three white men wounded, and some Italian traders with their waggons. At once the waggons were formed up everywhere, and with the dawn the rescue parties rode out.

Sarel Cilliers was early in the field with five men. They came up just in time to save a little party that had been caught by the Zulus before they could close their waggon-ring. Thus reinforced, and picking up stragglers as they went, they came in sight of a dozen van Rensburgs, farthest out of all, who had been driven from their waggons in the plain and were holding out desperately on a kopje. These signalled that they were short of powder. Cilliers and his men drove the Zulus off the nearest waggon, and one of their company, Marthinus Oosthuisen, loading himself with all the powder he and his horse could carry, dashed up the hill through the astonished warriors and got safely in with it. The combined parties then drove the Zulus before them. It was broad daylight now and there was no more resistance. 'Everything gave way to rage.'¹

The Zulus withdrew almost as quickly as they had come, so quickly that when Maritz and the main force

¹ J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i, 242, 370, 463; *Voortrekkermense*, i, 25, 36, 150, 222; iii, 6, 25, 47 n., 127.

came up, they were well away with their loot towards the Tugela drifts and out of reach. Bit by bit the Maatschappij could count its losses: 10,000 cattle and sheep at a first rough estimate; then, with more careful enumeration and, perhaps, reviving imagination, 25,000 head of cattle alone. But worse, much worse, was the death of forty-one men who could ill be spared and six times as many women and children, to say nothing of some 200 coloured servants. Close on 500 souls for one night's work, and the laagers full of wounded. There was work for the Italian woman, Teresa Viglione, with her medicines and ointments and bandages, and for devoted Father Smit among the bereaved and the dying.

In the midst of the lamentations the Trekkers and their wives, in little groups or great concourses, debated earnestly whether they should hold on or go back across the mountains. It could no longer be doubted that their Governor and his 100 men were also dead, but they decided to hold on. Natal was too fair a land to be given up at the first set-back; the Drakensberg were even harder to climb than to descend. Many a man had lost his draught oxen and could not move if he would; and if some men wavered, their women-folk were there to stiffen their courage. Dingaan, that man of blood, must be called to account for the innocent blood he had shed. 'God', declared fiery Susanna Smit, 'will not leave him unrecompensed nor will our men acquit him.'¹

The memory of the bloodstained waggons and the broken bodies in the laagers moved even Susanna's gentle old husband to mild truculence. On those early morning walks of his outside the crowded camp for prayer and meditation under the shadow of some con-

¹ *Voortrekkermense* (Smit), ii, 279. The Boer losses in this one week were about one-twelfth of their total strength.

venient rock, his 'Bethel and Pniel', Erasmus remembered how Elijah had 'prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not'. So he too prayed that there might be fair weather and dry gunpowder when next the Zulus should come.¹

The Zulu onslaught set the scattered groups of Boers hastening to and fro like ants from a broken ant-heap. Gradually they drew together into three great laagers, chief of which was Maritz's on high ground overlooking Bushmans river. So they waited anxiously for all that second half of February, while their patrols rode in and out. Fortunately the Tugela was in flood and, not for the last time, screened Natal from a possible Zulu invasion.

As soon as they safely could, Boer messengers rode down to Port Natal to glean fuller details of Retief's death and to discuss common action with the English. They found the handful of Europeans in a miserable plight. News of the Retief disaster had reached them a week after the event, and old Alexander Biggar had at once sent off a messenger to warn the Boers and his son, George, too late by a few hours to save him and them. Then the English and American missionaries had straggled in, weary and horror-struck, with such poor goods and chattels as they had been able to bring from their blazing huts across the swollen Tugela.

The English at the Port were ready to make common cause with the Boers against Dingaan, all the more as Gardiner, their disowned magistrate, was leaving them. Despairing of any support from Downing Street in his efforts to make Victoria a British colony, despairing also of doing any good among the Zulus in the midst of war, Gardiner actually sailed while the patrol was at

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 177.

the Port, to England first and at the last to a martyr's death in Tierra del Fuego. With him went some of the American missionaries who also had 'no hope of labouring for the natives who will be among the Boers'. But Owen of Umgungundhlovu, Anglican though he was, and the American Daniel Lindley, despairing of that also, stayed on to offer their services to the Maatschappij.¹

The patrol rode north in the middle of March, taking with them two of the English to arrange a combined attack on Dingaan. They arrived home to find hope and confidence reviving, for Hendrik Potgieter had come over to reinforce those of his party who were already in Natal, and Piet Uys had at last come down from the High Veld with his fighting tail to throw in his lot with the United Laagers, and had pitched his camp on the Little Tugela. Arrangements to meet the new order of things were made at a mass meeting. No one was appointed to succeed Retief as Governor; but Maritz retained his old offices and added thereto the post of Orphan Master, no sinecure with the estates of so many widows and orphans to administer. Uys was appointed General Field-Commandant of the projected expedition against the Zulus, but it was well understood that Potgieter would lead his own men. Failure having been thus assured as far as was humanly possible, Smit preached to the outgoing commando. The men, he noted, were despondent.²

The commando, nearly three hundred and fifty strong, trailed away eastward in two parties, leaving the laagers in a high state of nerves. A day or two after they had gone, a patrol brought eleven Zulus with their women and children into headquarters. While three of the warriors were being questioned the rest

¹ *Annals*, i, 228.

² *Voortrektermense* (Smit), ii, 191.

made a dash for the open. At once every Boer within range blazed away and the air was full of bullets and slugs and acrid smoke. When the smoke cleared all eight Zulus lay dead and, by the mercy of God, not a single Boer. Presently the three surviving Zulus were sent out as guides to a patrol. The patrol soon came back to report that, as the Zulus had seemed to be leading them astray, they had shot them out of hand.¹

Then in the midst of this tension came the dreadful news that the commando had been defeated and that Piet Uys was dead.²

It was all true. The commando had travelled for four days unopposed and had seen its first Zulus on the farther side of the Buffalo river. On the morrow, 11 April, the Zulus had drawn the burghers into cramped and broken country unsuited to their open style of fighting. On the high ground to right and left dense masses of warriors squatted among the boulders, waiting. Uys engaged the enemy to the right, Potgieter those to the left. Each commando left twenty men with its spare horses and equipment to act as a reserve and, if necessary, to cover the retreat. Uys, like a wise commander, stayed with his reserve. His people, their guns loaded with slugs, rode up the slope firing with terrible effect. As the Zulus broke they scattered in pursuit. This was too much for the impatient Uys. Calling to his son, Dirk, to follow him, he galloped off to join in the chase. Waiting, he cried, was not a man's work.

Meanwhile Potgieter hesitated, then advanced slowly, and then fell back. A dozen of his followers dashed at the enemy, but were beaten back with the loss of one

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 192.

² *Ibid.*, i, 165 ff.; iii, 49, 130 ff.; *Annals*, i, 233.

man. At that the impi swarmed down and, as they came upon them yelling and beating on their shields, the frightened horses carried their not unwilling riders homeward headlong.

Uys's people halted to find themselves cut off. They drew together and blasted their way through by concentrating their fire on one section of the encircling ranks. Most of them broke away, but the Zulus slew Uys and eight others, including young Dirk who gallantly turned back to stand by his dying father, and captured all the spare horses and equipment.

This defeat of the *Vlugcommando* at Italeni created something like a panic in the Maatschappij. The massacre at Umgungundhlovu had cost them far more lives, but that had been done by treachery upon unarmed men. The Blaauwkrans slaughter, more costly still, had been achieved by surprise on open laagers in the dark. But this was stark defeat in fair fight, and one of the leaders who had driven the Matabele all down Marico valley had been slain as he ran. Coming after unbroken triumph on the High Veld, it was paralysing. Was there a curse upon Natal? Nothing had gone right since they had entered this land that had 'shadows upon its borders'. And, as if Heaven were minded to second the ferocity of man, rain fell in torrents with thunder and hail on folk huddled together in the cramped shelter of their waggons.

The Potgieters at all events had had enough of the Natal adventure. They moved off *en masse* towards the mountains and the High Veld, pursued by cry of 'Traitors', the fiercest curse in the Afrikanders' vocabulary. There were many who talked of following them, but their leaders and their wives again and the widows persuaded them to stay and see it through. So

they stayed. They drew together into still fewer and bigger laagers for safety, strengthened their waggons with abattis of thorn-bush and sod walls, and sent out calls for help to their friends at the Port and their kinsmen behind the Drakensberg.

There was little enough help to be drawn from Port Natal. Just about the time of the *Vlugcommando*, Robert, Alexander Biggar's surviving son, had led a motley host against Dingaan: nineteen Englishmen, about as many coloured, and some 1200 Natal Zulus who owed allegiance rather to John Cane or Henry Ogle than to their nominal leader. They crossed the Tugela, fell upon the nearest Zulu kraal, and then fell upon each other in the scramble for captured cattle, girls and women.

The first expedition from the Port had thus ended half comically in an intertribal stick fight. The end of the second a fortnight later was full-dress tragedy. Ogle, whose people had had the worst of the recent bicker, refused to serve on this occasion, but young Biggar once more marched off with sixteen Europeans and their native retainers, and a score of coloured men. The Zulus tricked them as they had tricked Uys and Potgieter. They led them into a narrow place and then turned upon them. The little force gave a good account of itself, but two-thirds of the non-Europeans and all save three of the Englishmen were slain, including Biggar and Cane.

The survivors fled down to the Port pursued by the triumphant Zulus. There, the natives hid in the bush, and the Europeans sought refuge on board the *Comet*, a little Cape coasting vessel that had put in a few days before. It was crowded quarters, for, beside the crew, Lindley and Owen and their families were on board,

to say nothing of the Boer messengers and those few English who had not got away down to the friendly Pondo country. For nine days they watched the Zulus pillaging, destroying, slaying every moving thing they could find. Then the impi withdrew, and the *Comet* sailed gloomily away with the missionaries and all the white inhabitants of Port Natal, save half a dozen who elected to remain, and the Boers who made haste north to rejoin their friends.

On the strength of these Boers' report, Carel Landman rode down to the Bay with a strong detachment, and on 16 May, by arrangement with the English survivors, annexed Port Natal in the name of the United Laagers. Then, having appointed a landdrost and field-cornet and told off a few burghers to support them, he hurried back to the laagers with some waggon-loads of sorely needed foodstuffs.¹

Dread of Dingaan and the pitiless rain were driving the laagers together. Two small laagers planted themselves close to Maritz's camp on the banks of Bushmans river. At the end of May, old Jacobus Uys broke up his Modderlager on the Little Tugela, where the mud was so bad that it pulled the very shoes off the feet, and camped alongside the Maritzes with only the river between.

Here was a community of some 3600 Europeans. But propinquity did not breed unanimity. The leaders could not agree on a plan for a punitive expedition against Dingaan, very few helpers came down from the High Veld, and most of these that did rode away speedily in disgust. The scheme had to be abandoned.

On the other hand, some little progress was made in

¹ G. E. Cory, *The Rise of South Africa*, iv, 66; *Voortrekkermense*, i, 172 ii, 205.

constitution building. Jacobus Boshof, clerk to the Civil Commissioner of Graaff-Reinet, arrived at headquarters. He had been given leave to visit his parents at Swellendam in the south-west of the Cape Colony but had elected to make the journey by way of Natal, bringing with him ammunition and £25 from well-wishers in the Colesberg district. The Trekkers jumped at him. Here at last was a man with some knowledge of law and official procedure. Soon Boshof and a committee were busy working up the simple little rules of Thaba Nchu and Vet River into a written constitution, the constitution under which republican Natal was presently to be governed.¹

Boshof finished his labours and set off home to report for duty. But the constitution was not promulgated yet awhile. The Uyses and Maritzes quarrelled, the former demanding a local magistrate for their own laager. Nor did a meeting of the Public mend matters for all Smit's eloquent sermon on Deuteronomy xxxii: 'For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them'. All that came of it was that the mass meeting elected 'the estimable J. Boshof' chairman of the new and enlarged Volksraad when that should take shape and he return to them.²

Thereafter there was much coming and going. Small groups trekked away in despair to the High Veld; others went south, one to the Bushmansrand, the future site of Pietermaritzburg, and another under Carel Landman to the Port. Maritz and his personal following shifted camp to the Little Tugela at the very foot of the mountains, while the rest of the multiple laager on Bushmans river, 290 waggons strong, moved away a little distance and camped at the Gatsrand in a hollow.

¹ *Voortrekkerense*, ii, 207, 210.

² *Ibid.* (Smit), ii, 212.

Since there was no end in sight to their sojourn in laager, since also something must be done to protect their families from the incessant rain, the men at each of the big camps began to build huts, and to set their servants to work ploughing and sowing and, at the Gatsrand, cutting a big water furrow. They must get a crop for next season's seed. As it was, supplies of all kinds except meat were running perilously low. Sometimes the waggons returned from the neighbouring Zulu or Mantati kraals beyond the upper Tugela fully loaded, but often they came trundling home empty with the news that the Zulus were on the war-path. Meal, rice, coffee, sugar, tea, all were failing fast; there was soon no wine for Nagmaal, and the women were using up their last remaining needles. Then sickness broke out: foot-and-mouth disease among the cattle, fever and measles among the folk crowded in insanitary quarters. Death began to stalk through the camps. They buried the patriarch Jacobus Uys at the end of July. Then, to add to the general woe, the native servants fled in a body, from fear of Dingaan, some said; from an unnatural desire, Smit believed, to cultivate their own gardens now that the peril was past, rather than work honestly for the white men. One runaway was caught and duly 'corrected' with a sjambok, but the rest got clear away.¹

The peril was not past. Early in August Maritz ordered the big laager at the Gatsrand to join him at the foot of the mountains. The Gatsranders refused to budge; their lands were already ploughed and the water furrow half finished, and they were well off for firewood. Thus it was at the Gatsrand that the Zulus came upon them.²

¹ *Voortrekkermense* (Smit), ii, 219.

² *Ibid.*, i, 38, 171, 230; iii, 123; *Annals*, i, 374, 464.

It had rained and thundered all day. In the early part of the night the camp was startled by a shot, but it was only one of the look-outs firing at what he thought was a spy, and all was quiet again. Early next morning a couple of native herdsmen staggered into camp gasping out that the Zulus were coming. No one believed them; they had heard that tale too often before. But to make assurance doubly sure, a patrol went out and presently dashed back with the news that the impis were on them. Mercifully, the Zulus came on slowly. One Boer they slew herding sheep, and an old slave woman gathering firewood, but the rest of the Trekkers got back safely within the waggon-ring.

The laager was a strong one, wedge-shaped, with its base resting on the river-bank and a cannon mounted at its apex. But it was over large to be defended by seventy-five men, and, in spite of Erasmus Smit's prayers, there was rain in the air and much of the powder was damper than it should have been. Then, as the defenders gathered round Smit to pray, they looked up and saw the regiments swarming over hill and dale, 'all heathendom' marching majestically and slow, their leaders riding horses and bearing guns, spoil of the Retief and Uys disasters.

The Zulu array circled round and round the two exposed sides of the laager, firing their guns and hurling their assegais at long range, but never bunching and never closing for fear of the Boers' guns and their iron cannon loaded to the muzzle with scrap-iron and pot-legs. At length a mounted party went out from the camp and skirmished with them till sunset, and then both sides camped for the night.

For the defenders it was a hellish night. They doubled their sentries and hung out lanterns on whip-

stocks round the camp to guard against surprise, while, just out of range, the Zulus lit great fires and feasted on the captured sheep and oxen, hacking lumps and strips of flesh from the still living creatures. All night it went on, black forms silhouetted against the blaze, light glinting from well-greased limbs, shouting and singing, crackling of flames, and bellowing and bleating of wounded beasts.

The terror by night passed, and in the morning, early, mounted men rode out again to draw the Zulus within range. It was no use. They came near enough to hurl assegais wrapped in blazing grass at the waggon-tilts, but they would not close. Once more they skirmished until nightfall and then set the veld afire all round. In the morning they were gone.

Reinforcements came up from Maritz's laager. They left the youngsters to finish off the Zulu wounded,¹ and with such of the Gatsrand men as still had passable mounts, hurried off to regain the looted stock. They recovered some, but the rest were too far away, and presently the pursuit had to be abandoned.

For the next ten days the folk at Gatslager, or, as they now called it significantly, Veglager, hesitated pitifully. They knew they must fall back on Maritz's fortress, but they feared to move lest the Zulus returning catch them in the open. It took them five days, nervously, to get rid of the Zulu dead, 200 of them, dragging the corpses away with the help of oxen and tumbling them into a ravine. The air round the camp was foul before that work was finished. At last they plucked up courage and trekked away to pitch their camp next Maritz's on the Little Tugela under the shadow of the great hills down whose break-

¹ *Voortrekkermen*, i, 233.

neck passes they had hastened joyfully eight months back.

Forced back almost to their point of departure, the United Laagers sent messengers to beat up reinforcements in the northern districts of the Colony, in Graaff-Reinet, Beaufort and the Hantam. They themselves held on in rain and heavy gales that sometimes made fires impossible. Numbers of even their coloured servants deserted, taking with them stores and the horses and guns of their masters. Supplies ran lower and lower so that it was hard even to get candles, and at the end of September Gerrit Maritz died untimely.

This was the lowest point in the fortunes of the Maatschappij. But they did not lose heart. The Volksraad functioned both as a legislature and as a court. As court it tried a young Zulu captured at Veglager as soon as he had recovered from his wounds, and condemned him to death for his share in the Blaauwkrans massacre. Poor Smit had to prepare the prisoner for his end, and hard work he found it. He had only obeyed orders, the young man said, and they had never taught him at Umgungundhlovu that killing was any such grave matter. And so he faced the firing party with the stoical composure of his people.¹

As legislature the Volksraad issued instructions to its isolated officials in the south, and decreed that the town which was already being marked out on the Bushmansrand should be called Pietermaritzburg in pious memory of their dead chiefs, Retief and Maritz. In October it also promulgated the elaborate constitution which Boshof and his committee had drafted.

Maritz's death was a grievous loss, but it at least removed one obstacle to the smooth working of the

¹ *Ibid.* (Smit), ii, 228, 234.

ecclesiastical machinery. While he lived Maritz had always been ready, as magistrate, to marry couples, leaving it to them to decide whether or no they would have the religious ceremony performed subsequently by the predikant. But now the Volksraad decreed that all weddings must take place in church. Thus encouraged, Smit and his wife opened school in a sod hut built by friendly hands, Erasmus providing the usual simple curriculum and Susanna instruction in needlework. Smit also inducted new deacons, and at the end of October celebrated Nagmaal for the first time in Natal, with a large congregation and a record collection of more than thirty shillings.

Courage and confidence were rewarded. The tide began to turn slowly but unmistakably. Good news came from all quarters. A ship had cast anchor at the Port in the nick of time bearing supplies of all kinds collected by a Cape Town committee of well-wishers, and the messengers came back from the Colony to report that Andries Pretorius of Graaff-Reinet was on the way with a great company, and had given orders that everything must be made ready forthwith for the campaign against Dingaan.¹ All through that October and November the men in the laagers busied themselves with warlike preparations, and day by day new-comers arrived from the High Veld or the Port to be hailed with cheers and volleys.

There was need for hurry. British intervention had been long in coming, but there could be no doubt that it was coming at last.

For ten years past British statesmen had been exercised more and more by the problem of frontiers along which their own people faced tribal natives. If there

¹ *Voortrekkermentse*, i, 234.

were to be an end to the unauthorised incursion of traders with their powder and brandy and trade guns into native lands, an end to the drifting in of pastoralists with the inevitable fight to follow and the call for commandos and redcoats to follow that; if there was to be any stable settlement in Africa, a *modus vivendi* with the tribes must be found, and above all an impartial division made of the land on which white and black society alike depended.

The British Government was the only power that could enforce such a settlement, but it was not prepared to face the expense and effort that enforcement must entail. All it would envisage was the kind of treaty that D'Urban had made with the Griqua Waterboer in 1834 binding him to keep the peace in his territory in return for a subsidy, a few guns and the vague promise of support in emergencies, a warning to British subjects that they would go beyond the frontiers at their own risk, and the appointment here and there of magistrates, as at Port Natal, to enforce the Punishment Act with neither troops nor police.

The Great Trek cut dead across this flimsy system, if system it could be called. Long before the end of 1836 D'Urban had been perplexed. The Trek was not yet great, but it was an exodus in flat defiance of his orders against unauthorised emigration, and what might not the Trekkers do with their guns and horses and rough-and-ready frontier ideas among tribes with which his Government was already on avowed terms of amity? A disruptive force let loose on the High Veld might easily send native fugitives over the northern border, and there had been plenty of that when the Matabele and Mantatis had been on the move in the 'twenties. And what of the English at Port Natal? If the Boers

were to join them, there might be chaos in Natal which would drive one tribe in upon the next till the last was driven into the Eastern Province, and this at a time when an official economy campaign was threatening his garrison, and the Trek itself was robbing the eastern frontier of its hardest burghers.

Then there was the law of the matter. British subjects the Trekkers were and British subjects they must remain for all that they claimed to have shed their citizenship in the waters of the Orange, unless they submitted to the authority of potentates in the land of their adoption. And they would certainly not do that. Submission to a coloured or native chieftain would outrage all the pride of race that had not been able to stomach even equality before the law with such as these in the Colony. D'Urban could not recognise their independence. Downing Street forbade. It was impossible even to negotiate with them, as Retief and Uys both hinted that he should, until he was sure that the leaders could really speak for the people they professed to control. Neither could he stop them trekking. Only martial law and a large garrison could do that, and he had neither.

D'Urban therefore did his best to stem the tide by gentle methods. He spurred on the Lands Department to issue title-deeds with reasonable speed. He tried, though without success, to get compensation for war losses, he sent magistrates and what troops he could spare to give security on the frontiers, and he found an ally in the Dutch Reformed Church Synod, which issued a pastoral circular in October 1837 roundly condemning the Trek. How far that allocution checked the Trek can never be known. What is certain is that it sowed the seed of the suspicion with which the Trekkers

and many of their descendants regarded the Mother Church of the Colony.

The Great Trek went on apace, and in January 1838 D'Urban made way for Sir George Napier, another Peninsular veteran and a worthy brother of the man who wrote the history of that campaign and dealt with the Chartists like an officer and a gentleman. Napier already knew of the defeat of Msilikazi, the Queen's *amicus*, at Mosega; he had reports from official and missionary sources that trekking Boers were lifting native cattle and hunting Bushman children. On his arrival he was greeted by the news of the Retief massacre and the slaughter at Blaauwkrans, ill news balanced and more than balanced by tidings of the victory over the Matabele on the Marico and Pretorius's return with glowing reports of Natal. The Trek went on faster than ever.

In the midst of his many preoccupations on a troubled frontier, Napier found time to interview a Trekker delegation on the Orange river. He pleaded with them to come back to the Colony, promising to try to do for them all and more than D'Urban had tried to do, and hinting broadly that if they would not hearken he might have to occupy Port Natal. They thanked him civilly but declined to come back. They had, they said, no confidence in Her Majesty's Government. So Napier reported in that sense to his distant chief and asked leave to occupy the Port as a temporary measure. As he sealed his despatch, news reached him of the slaughter of the Natal English on the Tugela.

The Colonial Office yielded sufficiently to empower Napier to occupy Port Natal, to succour defenceless souls who might wish to return to the Colony, and to stop further fighting, but in no case to annex. In September, therefore, Napier took steps to control trade

with Natal, above all in munitions, and presently forbade trekking to help against the Zulus. A month later he sent Gideon Joubert, a level-headed field-cornet, to bring back from the Trekker laagers ex-slave apprentices who were entitled to receive full freedom on the appointed day in December. A month later still, in the middle of November, he sent Major Samuel Charters, R.A., with a small force and a commission under the Punishment Act, to occupy Port Natal and, generally, to maintain the peace of south-eastern Africa. Privately, he bade the Major put his medical officer and such stores as he could spare at the Trekkers' disposal.

Joubert came home with 40 ex-apprentices and left behind him another 100 who had elected to stay with their masters. Meanwhile his visit to the laagers in November had been a reminder to the Trekkers, busy with preparations for the campaign against Dingaan, that they were still within reach of the hated Colonial government. If anything were to be done against Dingaan, it must be done quickly.

On 22 November Pretorius rode in to the headquarters on the Little Tugela, a tall bulky man not yet past forty, armed cap-à-pie with gun and pistols and a heavy naval cutlass. To save time he had left his main trek somewhere between Modder and Sand rivers, and had pushed on ahead with sixty stalwarts and a fine bronze cannon.¹

Within a week of Pretorius's arrival all was ready. He himself was elected Head Commandant; Stephanus, brother of the dead Gerrit Maritz, was appointed to rule in his absence with orders to get the cattle into the laagers at sundown and to send out night patrols. On 28 November the commando moved off, heartened by

¹ *Voortrekker-mense*, i, 178; ii, 252; iii, 118, 144.



Photo A Ellis & Cape T 11

ANDRIES WILLEM JACOBUS PRFTORIUS
from a painting in the Art Gallery, Pretoria

Smit's rousing sermon on the text 'O Lord, defer not and do; defer not, for thy name's sake'. Whether the Lord would defer or no remained to be seen. Pretorius certainly had not.

After the commando had ridden away the United Laagers waited nervously for news from the front. Almost at once a luckless Englishman and a native approached the camp at nightfall. The women screamed and a patrol turned out. The native got away in the dusk but the Englishman was caught and sent to join the commando. Presently little groups of deserters came in shamefacedly with varying reports and were placed under arrest or sent back to rejoin the colours. And then on 12 December came ill news, that three ships had come into the Port and had landed soldiers, not without difficulty in the heavy surf. There could be no doubt about it, for here was a letter from their commander bidding Pretorius stand fast, and a proclamation from the Governor enjoining peace. Stephanus Maritz and his colleagues kept back these unwelcome missives against Pretorius's return, and merely replied civilly to the urbane Charters suggesting an impartial enquiry into the why and the wherefore of their presence in Natal and thankfully accepting his offer to sell them rice and sugar. That done they waited once more.

They had not long to wait. On Christmas Day came tidings of a resounding victory over the hosts of Dingaan on the banks of Blood river. Rejoicing was stilled momentarily by rumours of a check, but that was forgotten when Pretorius's official communique was received. Blood River battle had been a crowning mercy, nothing less, and a patrol was even now on its way home with 3600 head of cattle and a mob of sheep. Could headquarters send twenty-five men to the Tugela drift

to take them over? Headquarters certainly could. But why only twenty-five men? First, a solemn thanksgiving to God who had scattered the bones of those that had encamped against them, and then a stampede to the Tugela to be in time for the distribution of the booty.¹

The victorious commando, the *Wincommando*, had a stirring tale to tell.² The main body had travelled slowly till Carel Landman had joined it on the sixth day with the Port contingent which included Alexander Biggar, bent on avenging the death of his two sons, a few other Englishmen, and some seventy Natal Zulus. The force, nearly 500 strong, had then pushed on across the Tugela and Klip rivers high up, had drawn a blank at the kraals of a minor chief, Jobe, who had prudently fled with all his stock, and had then headed straight for Dingaan's capital.

On Sunday, 9 December, all had halted for the day as their custom was, and had taken oath at the hands of Sarel Cilliers, their acting-chaplain, that if God granted them the victory, they would build a church to His name wherever it might please Him, and celebrate the anniversary of the deliverance, they and their latest posterity, as a day of thanksgiving.

After two days more of very rough going, burning off the rank grass as they went, they had crossed the Buffalo. Pretorius had sent captured women to tell their king that there would be peace if he would restore the guns and horses he had taken, but nothing had come of that. So they had advanced skirmishing with Zulu patrols and, once at least, thanks to the Head Commandant's prudence, avoiding being trapped as Uys and Potgieter once had been between two parties of

¹ *Voortrekkermentse* (Smit), ii, 268.

² *Ibid.*, i, 48, 178; ii, 261; iii, 100, 124; *Annals*, i, 234, 244, 374, 438 ff.

the enemy posted in rocky country on either side of the track. On Saturday, 15 December, they had camped on the Blood river meaning to keep the Sabbath there.

It was a very strong position, this place that 'the Lord in His holy providence had appointed'.¹ A broad ravine with banks fourteen feet high discharged its waters into the Blood river and protected one side of the square laager. The river itself, at that point very deep, covered a second side. The cannon were mounted one on each of the sides that were still open to attack. Raw hides were stretched tightly over the waggon-wheels, ladders were planted behind the waggons for the convenience of the defenders, and at dusk lanterns were hung out in case of surprise.

All had been quiet that night. At dawn the burghers had stood to. As the sky cleared they had seen 'all Zululand' sitting round them ring upon ring.² At once the Zulus had sprung to their feet and come on at speed, their front ranks firing; and as they came, the Boers had opened rapid fire. It had been 'a day as if ordained', clear and bright, a day on which men could 'see the sights' of their guns.³ No need to worry about damp powder this time, but no time to ram home either; just a handful of powder and another of slugs, and fire at point-blank range. After the third or fourth volley, men could hardly see for the smoke. It was all 'shouting and tumult and lamentation, and a sea of black faces, and a dense smoke that rose straight as a plumb-line upwards from the ground'.⁴

The Zulus had come on again and again with the greatest resolution, and each time had been driven back with cruel losses. At last, after the battle had lasted

¹ *Annals*, i, 245.

² *Voortrekermense*, i, 188.

³ *Annals*, i, 245

⁴ *Annals*, i, 375.

for two hours and more, Pretorius had ordered simultaneous sorties from both gates by every man who could be spared. The Zulus had stood to it for a moment, then they had wavered and fled. Scores had been shot down as they ran, scores as they crouched beneath their big shields close under the banks of the gully and the river, scores more as they tried to hide themselves beneath the bloodstained waters with only their nostrils above the surface. How many had fallen, it was hard to say; perhaps 3000. Their bodies had lain piled up outside the waggon wall 'like pumpkins on a rich soil'.¹ Of the Boers sixty had fled away homeward after the sortie, but none had been killed, and only three wounded, one of whom was Pretorius stabbed in the left hand.

Weakened though it was by desertion, the *Win-commando* had pushed on to Umgungundhlovu. They had found the town deserted and the palace burned, but among the ruins they had found Dingaan's treasure in amazing variety. They had promptly auctioned all these things, including two small cannon, and the fine silver cup which the Head Commandant bought in.² Something else they had found. On the Hill of Execution lay the remains of Retief and his followers, and in Retief's knapsack was the deed granting all Natal to the Maatschappij preserved through all those months as if by a miracle.

Having buried the bodies of their dead comrades, the commando had camped outside the town while patrols had gone out in search of cattle. It was then that ill luck had come upon them. Two days after Christmas, Pretorius had led out 150 men against Zulus who were in broken ground guarding great herds of

¹ *Annals*, i, 246.

² *Voortrekkermense*, i, 313.

cattle. As the ground was too rough to get the cannon through and his wounded hand pained him, Pretorius had returned to camp leaving strict orders to his second in command to be careful. No sooner had his back been turned than his followers had dashed in. They had been trapped. Many of the 'cattle' had been warriors creeping on all-fours in and out among the bushes with their ox-hide shields on their backs. The patrol had fought its way out with the loss of Biggar, five other white men and five of Biggar's natives.¹

The force had waited a couple of days hoping to draw the Zulus into the open. But the Zulus had declined battle, the horses were badly knocked up, deserters were making off home in twos and threes, and the rest were so anxious to be off too that Pretorius had delayed sending in his report lest he be mobbed by men desirous of the honour of escorting the messenger. There had been nothing for it but to ride home. So here they were mightily surprised to learn that the British were already at the Port, but for that very reason thankful that 'the war had already been waged'.²

Blood River, the Sunday battle, by no means broke Dingaan's power, but it had taught the Zulus to think twice before they attacked the Boers, and it gave back to the Boers all the confidence in the Lord and their own good right arms that had been shaken by the disasters of 1838. There would have to be another expedition against Dingaan as soon as possible. The loot of cattle had been disappointingly small, and the guns and horses were still unrecovered. But that could wait. First let the people reap the fruits of victory, let them break out of their cramped and unhealthy laagers and spread themselves over the good land which Pre-

¹ *Annals*, i, 235.

² *Ibid.*, i, 249.

torius had, 'always by the will of God . . ., conquered with the sword'.¹

At once all was joyful confusion, packing, cooking for the journey, inspanning. Some poor souls who had lost nearly everything and others who had never had much to lose must go back over the wall of the Drakensberg to seek a living by their guns. Pretorius himself was off to the High Veld to fetch his own folk down into Natal. But the rest, the great majority, were going south.

Father Smit preached the farewell sermon: 'I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem and mete out the valley of Succoth', and forthwith the Maatschappij set out *trekkie* by *trekkie* for Pietermaritzburg and the coast. Smit himself and Susanna his wife travelled in their borrowed waggon with a party of thirty families, followed by the red and white cow and her calf and the red cow with a riem through her nose that were their share of the spoil. Over the rolling hills they went towards the Mooi river valley. Blue skies at first, heat at midday, in the afternoon thunderclouds piling up before a cold wind, and presently such a furious down-pour that the waggons had to stand fast, Smit's stuck firmly in a mud-hole. And so to bed 'wet, weary and cold'.

It rained all that night and the next day and the next night; but on the morrow the sun shone and their spirits rose. Sitting on the friendly arm of a great tree, while the women of the party gathered flowers all around, Smit let his enthusiasm go till even he ran short of superlatives. Hereabouts it was 'more and more indescribably beautiful', he rhapsodised. Beautiful indeed after the terrors and discomforts of the months

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, ii, 271.

in camp under the shadow of the Drakensberg, if only it were not for the rain which began once more—and the roads, all knobbly boulders and pot-holes. For three solid days it poured, muddying the drinking water and making the ground so slippery that the oxen could not draw, and when at last they could get forward, the disselboom of poor Smit's waggon broke. But the Bushmansrand was in sight, and good friends helped the weary old man through the broad and shallow drifts of the Umgeni into Pietermaritzburg, capital of 'the Free Province of New Holland in South East Africa', the land which the Trekkers had 'bought with their earnings and paid for with their blood'.¹

Pietermaritzburg was only a glorified laager, and such it was to remain till Dingaan's power had been finally shattered a year later, but it was far and away the biggest of the new settlements. It had its drawbacks. Folk could not live there at first with the carefree security of those round the Port who were farther than they from Zululand. The country round was flatter and less attractive than the northern heights or the luxurious tropical coast-belt, the town was set in a hot hollow, and there was no good supply of firewood for miles around. But it had its good points in Boer eyes. It was central, lying upon the middle terrace of Natal, neither so cold as the highlands nor so oppressively hot as the coastlands. A furrow would soon give them a good supply of water. Moreover, the country round was good for farming; free, they believed, from cattle sickness and certainly from the flies that plagued the camps round the Port. And if the site were in a hollow, they rather preferred it so. It was their tradition. Most of the dorps in the Old Colony had been built in hollows. Finally it

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 279.

was no bad thing to have the capital at a respectful distance from the waves which Britannia claimed to rule. So down the Boers came trooping and, in February, Pretorius brought in his following to the capital which in his mind's eye he already saw as a town of 2000 souls, no less.

Pretorius was in fine fettle. He was at the height of his reputation. The mantle of Retief had fallen upon him and to it he had added the laurels of Blood River. Neither he nor anyone else doubted that he could wear both. It was only as time passed and difficulties mounted up that the weaknesses of his nature and training were displayed. Andries Pretorius, for all his height and brawn and stern-set mouth, was a much lesser man than the dead Retief or even than Gerrit Maritz. His experience was more limited than theirs. He was just an average well-to-do Graaff-Reinet cattle farmer with the scanty book-learning of his kind, and very little conception of the way the world was going outside the frontier districts. Sound enough according to his lights in ordinary times, he was apt to lose grip in a crisis and to try to make up for that loss by bluster. He had already shewn signs of the first failing at the end of the recent campaign; he was destined before long to give full proof of the latter.

But in the glorious sun of those early months of 1839 there was little hint of future discontents. Pretorius had come back from the High Veld in triumph. Everything was going well. Congratulatory addresses had poured in upon him from the Caledon valley chiefs; Graaff-Reinet had been illuminated when the news of Blood River battle had reached it. The Great Trek from the Colony was going on faster than ever, and a full 2000 armed men were said to be strung out between the

Orange drifts and the Drakensberg, heading for Natal. Best of all perhaps, Pretorius announced that Commandant Potgieter had 'again united himself to us with all his people'. If all went well, Natalians might hope that the scattered bands on the High Veld would see the error of their ways and come down the passes to lend a hand in making a strong free republic in Natal.¹

Already the free republic had made touch with the outer world by sea. Two little trading-vessels from the Colony had put in at the Port. What though prices were so exorbitant that the Boers would not buy, the Boers could do without. There were saltpans on either side of the Vaal, and so long as they had meat and mealies and pumpkins they could dispense with luxuries. But the encouraging thought was that where these ships had come, others would follow.

Nevertheless, there could be no full and free development of Boer society in Natal, no hope of real security nor of adequate supplies of labour, till a final settlement be made with Dingaan. And there could be no such settlement until the Queen's troops were gone from the Port.

There were not many soldiers at little Fort Victoria which Charters had built on the Point, perhaps 100 of the 72nd Highlanders and a few gunners. But they were enough to enable the Major to put the shores of the bay for two miles inland under martial law, and to sequester all the ammunition he could find whether in British or Boer hands. He was now waiting for burghers to seek his protection.

¹ The main published sources for the history of Boer Natal are *Voor-trekker Wetgewing* (ed. G. E. Preller); J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i and ii; J. C. Chase, *Natal Papers*, i and ii; *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke, 1829-1849* (ed. H. S. Pretorius and D. W. Kruger).

Charters could not be blamed for expecting a warmer welcome than he had received. The Governor had been encouraged to send him to Natal by reports from an Englishman of doubtful antecedents that he and his followers were anxious to see British authority established there, and from the optimistic Henry Ogle, sole survivor of the original settlers, that fully 300 Boers were desirous of British protection. The 300 did not shew themselves, and presently Charters went back to the Colony overland through the Pondo country to assure Faku, the *amicus* of the Queen, that the Boers meant him no harm. He left Captain Henry Jervis in command.

The Boers round the Port were on good enough terms with the soldiers. Many of them had fought by their side in D'Urban's war and now came to the Fort to talk with the captain and to watch his Highlanders drilling in their hot red jackets and tartan trews or his blue-coated gunners performing miracles of spit and polish on their guns. One or two confessed privately that they would return to the Colony gladly but were ashamed to say so, still more regretted bitterly ever having left home, but almost without exception they assured Jervis they would do anything rather than submit to Her Majesty's Government in their new country. Nor would they recognise his authority as magistrate.¹

Most of the Natalians up-country were irritated at the presence of troops whose purpose they did not understand. On the other hand, the Maritzburg authorities understood that well enough. Both Charters and Jervis had insisted that their primary object was to restore peace. This, Pretorius said, he would gladly see done if it meant security and the recovery of the

¹ *Annals*, i, 576.

looted cattle. The stress was now apparently on cattle rather than on the horses and guns the Zulus had shewn themselves singularly incapable of using. No matter. With great difficulty Jervis opened negotiations with the suspicious Dingaan, who promised to accept any terms 'the captain of the English' might make. With that Jervis managed to arrange a peace conference at the Port.¹

Pretorius came down to the conference towards the close of March in a truculent mood, talking much of the 2000 stalwarts who were said to be hastening across the High Veld 'all anxious to give the last death-blow to the now humbled bloodhound'. But Jervis's Scottish coolness, and the fact that the Zulus had promised full reparation and security and had already brought in 300 horses as a proof of good faith, calmed him down. He consented to negotiate. But he would have nothing of British mediation. He would deal with the envoys alone. Above all he would not hear of Jervis marking out the land that Dingaan must give in terms of his deed of cession. So it was done. The Zulus promised to hand over the captured equipment, horses, guns, sheep, and 19,000 head of cattle, to set free neighbouring tribes from their yoke, and not to cross the Tugela without a pass on pain of death. Pretorius for his part promised to protect them during their good behaviour and to punish Boers who strayed to the wrong side of the river.

Peace on this well-worn Colonial segregation basis was signed on 13 May, and Captain Jervis sat back conscious of good work well done. He was persuaded that in spite of the difficulties that might arise in satisfying the claims of those who had been robbed of

¹ *Ibid.*, i, 576.

their property, the more influential Boers, thankful for peace, would not press the claims against Dingaan. He was mistaken. Reparations is an elastic term that can be made to cover more things than are in the philosophy of a simple soldier. The peace settlement which the Volksraad ratified contained terms of which Jervis knew nothing. The Republic claimed a full half of the Zulu kingdom by right of conquest. Dingaan must clear his folk out of all the broad lands that lay north of the Tugela up to a line nine miles or so beyond the Black Umfulosi river and St. Lucia Bay. Then, and then only, should there be peace. It was to be a peace of 'extermination' after all.¹

Peace having been ostensibly achieved, the Pietermaritzburg authorities watched for the troops to sail away. The soldiers made no move. Sir George Napier had long come to the conclusion that the best means of stopping the Trek, which was weakening his frontier districts and threatening to trouble the tribes that lined his eastern frontier, was to annex Natal outright. That he could not do, but he seized every opening afforded to him by evanescent Secretaries of State to hold on until the Great Trek should have been checked.

So Napier held on while points of friction multiplied daily between Jervis and the Volksraad. The latter demanded that Jervis should hand them back the ammunition and arms Charters had sequestered, as well as the weapons he himself had just taken from the survivors of Louis Trigardt's party who had recently come home from Delagoa Bay. Jervis offered to do so if they would engage to use them only for defensive purposes. The Volksraad replied arrogantly. It was time for Jervis to be gone now that peace had been made.

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 2.

As for the guns and so on, he could keep them. It had enough of its own to arm another 600 men.

Meanwhile Dingaan attempted to carry out some portions of his treaty. He sent back the guns and saddles and horses and, from time to time, a quantity of ivory; he ordered his brother, Panda, to bring all his people out of the country along the Tugela and to settle them behind the Umfulosi, the line named in the secret clause of his treaty, and, presumably to gain elbow room to the north, he sent impis against Sapusa, King of the Swazis, beyond the Pongola river. But he only sent in the promised cattle in dribblets, for like all great chiefs, he found cattle the hardest of all things to collect and the hardest to part from. Nor is it certain that to the end he knew the exact number that was required of him.¹

The end was made of Dingaan, not by force of Boer arms, but by Zulu treason. Panda, his brother, defied him, fled across the Tugela with 17,000 men, women and children, and encamped with his swarms of cattle some thirty miles north of Port Natal.

Panda's coming threw the Natalians into a state of wild excitement. In spite of the treaty, a few Zulus had already drifted into Natal and nothing said. But this was an invasion. Men talked loudly of falling upon people who were a potential danger and actual possessors of so many desirable beasts; their wives, woman-like, clamoured for direct action, and even the Raad resolved that Panda must be driven out if necessary.² But first it tried negotiation. Panda, every inch a gentle-

¹ J. W. Fairbridge to John Fairbairn, 6 May 1840, quoting from a letter by William Cowie, a Scottish burgher of Natal. Cowie had been one of a commission that visited Zululand on reparation business (South African Public Library, Cape Town).

² *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 13; *Annals*, i, 554.

man for all his obesity, appeared in person at Maritzburg. He asked the Raad for its protection and offered to co-operate with it against his royal brother.

The Natalians had long ago made up their minds that Dingaan did not intend to carry out the treaty. They would hardly have been pleased had he done so. Here now was a golden opportunity of settling with him, of breaking the Zulu power once and for all, of acquiring the cattle that were needed to set them on their feet, and of winning the security that would end their long sojourn in towns that were virtually camps.

They were carrying on and had reaped a fair harvest, but life in the village-camps was unhealthy and even dangerous. There had been an epidemic of sore eyes among the children. Measles had slain many who could not fight it on short commons in the winter cold. Again, at Maritzburg in August, a servant girl had upset a candle. The flames had shot up in the wooden hut and leaped from thatch to thatch and thence to the waggons laden with gunpowder. The women and children had fled out into the night screaming 'Kaffirs, Kaffirs', while the men fought the blaze amid the shattering boom of exploding waggons. They had got it under at last but only at the cost of nine killed and twelve injured. They must get out into the open, and here was Panda pointing the way.¹

A bargain was soon struck. The landdrost of the Port rode in state to Panda's temporary great place accompanied by twenty-five burghers and Adulphe Delegorgue, a shrewd and acid-tongued French naturalist. There he displayed the new republican tricolour² and installed

¹ *Annals*, i, 466.

² In the Natal flag, the Dutch red, white and blue lateral stripes became

Panda as Reigning Prince of the Emigrant Zulus under the protection of the Republic. Panda must promise to go back behind the Tugela as soon as he could safely do so, to murder no one whether for witchcraft or any other cause, and to assume all Dingaan's liabilities under the recent treaty both in the matter of cattle and land. All of which 'the Black One' undertook to do and promptly gave proof of his newly acquired power by condemning an unhappy wretch to instant execution, while the landdrost, once he had recovered from his not unnatural alarm, gave him leave to eat up a thievish petty Zulu captain who was said to be hostile to the Republic, with prayers that there might be no unnecessary shedding of blood.¹

Strengthened by this hopeful understanding with Panda, the Raad decided to make provisional arrangements for the coming campaign against Dingaan and to force the pace a little with the British at Fort Victoria. They themselves could hardly move so long as the *rooibaadjies* were there, and, so long as they were there, the British Government might do much that would be fatal to the Republic. From time to time rumours had reached them of a scheme of immigration to Port Natal, and now they had proof positive in the Colonial newspapers that an association was being formed in London to plant a settlement there on Gibbon Wakefield lines.

The Raad tried first to cut off all communications between the Port and Zululand. It forbade one of the American missionaries who had recently returned to triangles, the apex of the white pointing to the pole and its base forming the outer edge of the flag; *vide Die Huisgenoot*, 25 May, 1928, article by W. Blommaert.

¹ *Annals*, i, 540, 554 ff.; *Voort. Weigewing*, p. 15 n.

Natal to lend his interpreter to Jervis, and laid an embargo on the cattle barter with the Zulus. That earned for it the hostility of Ogle and Daniel Toohey, a Cape merchant's clerk, who carried on the traffic through their dependent Port natives. No matter; all cattle coming across the Tugela were to be entered to the account of reparations. Finally the Raad sent Jervis a stiff protest against his continued presence and against the immigration project.

This protest was a formal declaration of independence. It told how the Trekkers had gone forth from the Cape Colony 'insulted, ridiculed and degraded in their honour and reputation'; how they had been proceeding on their way when Msilikazi, 'that fearless blasphemer, challenged the Great Incomprehensible Being' by attacking them; how next 'the treacherous murderer, Dingaan', had fallen upon them, and so down to the present moment when they saw their country threatened with invasion by 'poor deluded strangers'. The Raad gave fair warning that if immigrants came they would be treated as enemies of the State, and if they came backed by overwhelming force the Natalians would take to the hills and fight, neither giving nor accepting quarter, 'according to the principles of Don Carlos'.¹

Had the Raad but known it, there was no need for this passionate protest. On that very day in far-away Cape Town, Napier was writing to tell Jervis to withdraw his men. Napier knew that the alliance with Panda boded war, but since Downing Street would not face the annexation of Natal, the troops had better come away. They were too few to check the inflow of munitions or to defend the tribes, and just numerous

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 23 n.

enough to unsettle the Boers. Besides, the 72nd was on the point of sailing home and the Port Natal detachment could not be left behind.

So, on Christmas Eve 1839, Captain Jervis and his men wished the Natalians good luck and went aboard their transports. As they set sail the republicans ran up their colours on the flagstaff in Fort Victoria and fired their cannon. Was it a parting salute or was it, as Delegorgue suggested, 'good riddance'? Delegorgue was a Frenchman, and memories of Waterloo were still comparatively fresh. Maybe it was something of both.

At once all was bustle and stir at the capital and the Port. The Raad decided to secure the republic's rear by making a treaty, if possible, with Faku, the Pondo chief on the southern border, and further forbade strangers to leave the country while the campaign lasted, or, even after it was over, to go without official sanction. Next, it obliged burghers in the coast-lands to mount guard at the Port, twenty at a time for a fortnight as in the old East India Company's days, duty to carry with it the full privileges of service with the commando, and rations to be supplied by the landdrost from cattle taken from the local natives up to the number that might have been stolen by them. It requisitioned powder and purchased 'the great cannon' from its gunner-owner for £18 : 15s., half cash down and the rest in six months. It placed under arrest Tambusa, one of Dingaan's Great Indunas, and his attendant who had just come in with ivory and 200 head of fine cattle, and made its final arrangements with Panda and his general, Nongalasa. The indemnity was now to be not a mere 19,000 but 40,000 head of cattle. The

¹ *Annals*, i, 562, 576 ff.

difference presumably was the price Panda must pay for the crown of Zululand.

The commando mobilised slowly during the middle weeks of February.¹ Parties came in from all Natal and even a few score men from the High Veld. The plan of campaign was comprehensive. The commando, 400 strong without counting the usual tale of coloured and native servants, was to march independently taking with it Panda as a guarantee of good faith, and the miserable Tambusa and his attendant in irons. Nongalasa was to march more or less parallel to its route, reinforced by Jobe, restored to favour now, and another minor Zulu chieftain, Matawan, who had also deserted Dingaan. These were to attack when and how they could and were spurred on to valour by a couple of Boer *représentants en mission*, by the rewards which Pretorius offered for the heads of Dingaan and of Umhlela, his remaining Great Induna, and the certain knowledge of what would be their fate if Dingaan's warriors were victorious. Finally, Sapusa and his Swazis were to watch for Dingaan at the drifts of the Pongola.

The commando moved away with frequent halts. There was no hurry. It was an altogether different assemblage from the disheartened *Vlugcommando*, half beaten before it had started, or the grim *Wincommando* that had marched knowing that if it failed, the whole Natal venture must fail. Now men joked at the memory of Zulus mown down at Blood river, boasted of the easy victory that was coming, spoke eagerly of the spoil that was to be theirs, and larked in camp like schoolboys let loose.

Beyond the Sundays river the commando began to get news of its allies and of the enemy. First, that

Dingaan had sent in 100 oxen as a peace offering, but since the herdsmen had fled on seeing Jobe's people, Jobe had taken charge of the beasts. Then that Dingaan had moved away north-eastward and that Nongalasa had come up with him. Pretorius sent a message to the Zulu general that he must not attack before the commando could join him, and made the best of his way across the swollen Buffalo with the loss of some waggons. Holding on somewhat to the north of the site of Blood River battle—a party found the ground there white with dead men's bones—the force drew near to the White Umfulosi.

There Pretorius staged a grim farce. Tambusa and his companion were summoned before a court-martial on which Panda, sworn enemy of their master and themselves, had a seat. Panda fiercely urged the charges against Tambusa: he was a killer, Dingaan's evil genius. Tambusa merely pleaded that his companion should be set free. He made no defence for himself. It could have made no difference if he had, for this was a political trial and the result was a foregone conclusion. Both men were condemned to be shot, but when Pretorius reminded the Great Induna that he would soon stand before a Judge who would only release him from everlasting punishment if he repented of his sins, Tambusa replied quietly that he only knew one master, Dingaan, and that if he were faithful to him, 'the Master on high, if there were one, could not fail to approve his conduct'.¹ So Tambusa and his friend were shot at sixty paces, and that day the commando forded the White Umfulosi.

On the morrow came news that Nongalasa had won a pyrrhic victory over the hosts of Dingaan. Umhlela

¹ *Annals*, i, 577.

was slain, the King was fleeing towards Swaziland, and swarms of cattle had been taken. Swarms, indeed, that interrupted divine service next day as they trooped up to the laager, and other swarms to come. During the next ten days Boer and native patrols were busy sweeping up cattle as far north as the bush-clad and fever-stricken banks of the Pongola beyond which Dingaan had disappeared with a few faithful followers and still considerable herds.

One thing remained to be done. On the banks of the Black Umfulosi, to the salute of twenty-one guns, Pretorius proclaimed Panda King of the Zulus. Then, nominally in lieu of payment for waggon-hire and other expenses incidental to the two campaigns against Dingaan, but really in terms of the secret treaty, he took possession of St. Lucia Bay and the southern half of Zululand in the name of the Matschappij.

The commando rode home. After rewarding some of its native allies with cattle and land, it brought 36,000 head across the Tugela. Of these 14,000 were taken over by the High Veld contingent for distribution beyond the mountains, and the remainder were held for distribution in Natal. Over and above the cattle there were more than 1000 Zulu children, 'apprentices' who would go far to solve the problem of domestic service. And there were still more cattle to come. Jobe and Matawan, allies, were convicted on Boer and hostile Mantati evidence of keeping back part of the spoils. For this, the sin of Achan, they must pay 8000 head between them. Panda, ally-in-chief, was informed that a further 15,000 head would be required of him.¹

¹ *Annals*, i, 596 ff., 626.

They called the commando the *Beestecommando*, the Cattle Commando.

Thus the Zulus broke their own military machine and gave the Maatschappij security, and the Cattle Commando gave it land and labour and cattle. No need now for the people to dwell cooped up in fortified camps. Each man could hope to live 'in quiet, free, and . . . exempt from taxation' on his own place, while the Government pushed on with the making of the State.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAKING OF A REPUBLIC

I, Ini, by God's grace king of the West Saxons . . . with all my ealdormen and the most distinguished witan of my people, and also with a large assembly of God's servants, have been considering of the health of our souls and of the stability of our realm; so that just law and just kingly dooms might be settled and established throughout our folk. . . .

STUBBS, SELECT CHARTERS, p. 61

IN theory the Maatschappij, the Company of Emigrant South Africans, was one body. Actually it was much divided. Some groups had remained on the High Veld on either side of the Vaal, others had ventured into Natal and had then gone back again behind the Drakensberg, others latterly had been content to come no farther than the plains of Transorangia just beyond the Colonial frontier. But the main body, and those the most steady-going and substantial folk, had come down into Natal. It was in Natal, a pleasant land of manageable size, that the first experiment of a Trekker republic was tried out. *Ex pede Herculem*.¹

The Natalians had to build a State almost from the foundations upwards in a new and untried country. They were somewhat better equipped for the work than when they had first trekked from the Colony. Retief and Maritz might both be dead, but their successors

¹ *Voortrekker Wetgewing. Notule van die Natalse Volksraad*, 1839-1845, ed. G. S. Preller, *passim*. This is the principal Boer source for Natal from May 1839 till October 1845.

had learned something of the conduct of public affairs and the handling of considerable bodies of men and women, and were guided by the constitution that had been in the making during the sojourn on the High Veld and in the laagers on the Little Tugela. As soon as the Blood River victory of December 1838 had weakened the power of Dingaan and given the Natalians confidence, they had set to work with a good heart to adapt their lives and their system of governance to ordinary frontier conditions.

Throughout 1839 they had done so in the face of grave obstacles: the British at the Port and the still formidable Zulu power beyond the Tugela. But by February 1840 the redcoats were gone, Dingaan was broken, and Panda ruled what was left to him of Zululand as the humble dependant of the Republic. For all that year and the next and half the next, until the soldiers occupied Port Natal once more, the Natalians were free to work out their ideas of the proper relations of Christian men to God, to the powers that be in Church and State, to the stranger within the gate and without, and to the people of the land. True, from the New Year of 1841 onwards, the shadow of the Imperial Government had begun to stretch out once more slowly and haltingly over the Republic, but it was over a republic that was already wilting from inherent weaknesses. Before ever the troops came back in May 1842 the Republic of Natal had broken down under the weight of burdens which Trekker society was incapable of bearing.

The Natal constitution, the model on which the constitutions of the High Veld republics were one day to be based, had its roots in the laws enacted at Thaba Nchu and Vet River in 1836-37. These had been ex-

panded by Jacobus Boshof, the errant clerk of Graaff-Reinet, and his committee in 1838, and had been put into force as opportunity offered.¹

The Boshof Constitution was longer and more systematically arranged than either of its predecessors. Under it the executive, legislature and bench were more sharply differentiated. The Volksraad retained certain judicial and even executive duties, but it was to be first and foremost a legislature. Its powers were wide. It could make laws by mere resolution, for there was no review either by President or upper house. It could appoint, instruct and dismiss officials, define the jurisdiction of the courts, conclude and ratify treaties, fix frontiers, grant or sell public land, lay out towns and villages, and provide for the common welfare in all things from negotiating with the Imperial authorities down to prescribing the death penalty for pigs that rootled in the streets and poultry that fouled the water-supply of the capital.

The men to whom these duties were entrusted were to be between the ages of twenty-five and sixty, free, it might be hoped, from the puerilities of the very young and the obstinacy of the old. They were elected on the basis of one white man, one vote, to serve for a year and to pay a fine if they refused to serve or resigned without leave. Rules were laid down for the summoning of the legislature, but in practice the full Raad met quarterly. From March 1842 onward, a Commissie Raad of such members as were available carried on during the recess and submitted its work for ratification at the next full session. Twelve formed the quorum of the full house of twenty-four, a *voorsitter* was elected at each quarterly session, and discipline was kept by fine, censure or, in the last resort, expulsion.

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. xii ff.

The Volksraad was the final court of appeal. Below it was the landdrost's court at the capital and at such other centres as might be indicated. The landdrost was to be appointed by the Raad but was only to be dismissed after impeachment. Sitting alone, he could deal with minor civil and criminal cases and all cases between master and servant. But in more serious cases he must call in six local heemraden who were bound to serve for a year or pay a fine for evasion of duty. An appeal lay from this full court to one still fuller composed of landdrost, heemraden and twelve jurymen. In this court the decision really lay with a two-thirds majority of the jury. Crimes punishable by death or banishment must go to a court of this kind in the first instance, and then the jury must be unanimous; but no criminal sentence, great or small, could be executed without confirmation by the Volksraad. The law was to be the '*Hollandsche regtspleging*', that is, local legislation with the gaps filled in by the Roman-Dutch law.

As in the old Colonial days, the landdrost was also chief executive officer of the district. But side by side with him, or on occasion the landdrost himself in another capacity, was the Field Commandant, a military officer appointed by the Volksraad usually on petition of those who would have to serve under him. Below him were field-cornets elected by the men of their wards, wielding minor military, civil and judicial powers. Police there were none other than the '*jussitie Kaffers*' (native constables) who tried to keep order among the black folk round the Port. All men must, of course, go to the help of the landdrost or his deputy when called upon under pain of fine; but for cattle-patrol, hue and cry and regular warfare there was only the *burgermag*, the commando in whole or in part.

The weakest point in this Trekker polity was the head of the executive. This was almost non-existent. Retief had been Governor and chairman of a Council of Policy as well as Head Commandant and chairman of the Council of War. No one had yet been appointed to succeed him as Governor when Boshof and his committee were drawing up the Instructions. But they had assumed that this would soon be done, and had provided for a '*President van Politie*', a civil head of the State. Actually no such head was appointed in republican Natal nor in any of the High Veld republics for many long years. The military head alone survived. The Head Commandant, or the Commandant-General, was the nearest approach there was to a permanent central executive officer.

Head Commandant Pretorius, Predikant Smit, and the Kerkraad had established themselves at the capital immediately after Blood River, and there, in May 1839, the Volksraad assembled. It appointed landdrosts and heemraden for the two districts of Maritzburg and Port Natal, and a few other necessary officials, and then settled down to business.

During 1839 the constitution functioned better than might have been expected, perhaps because the burghers were not yet widely scattered and were ready to hold together in face of the British and the Zulus. After all it was only under external pressure that their ancestors in the United Provinces had known how to close ranks. But there were difficulties from the start. To make sure of a quorum at the beginning of sessions the Raad was often obliged to co-opt a convenient official or a 'respectable inhabitant' or to retain one of the outgoing members by lot. Presently it instituted fines for honourable members who arrived late for the sitting, and just

before the Cattle Commando marched to gather wealth in Zululand, it provided a daily allowance for board and lodging as the only way of inducing members to remain till the business of the session had been finished.

As early as January 1840 the Raad faced the problem of how to check hasty and possibly contradictory legislation. It resolved that the existing Instructions should only be altered by laws in keeping with them. In other words, it went far towards recognising the Boshof Constitution as a rigid constitution.

This resolution against hasty legislation was a move in the long-continued struggle between the Volksraad party and the Head Commandant and the Public. The issue was a real one: the oligarchs against Caesar and the democrats. An individual appeals more to the popular imagination than does a Sanhedrin, and the Head Commandant was the only official in the Republic who stood out as a possible leader of the State. As for the Public, the free men assembled in arms for debate had been recognised as a legislative authority by the Thaba Nchu-Vet River Constitution. It was hardly possible under the new conditions in Natal to get it together in any one place, but that did not prevent sections of it holding mass meetings and signing petitions. And not the electors only but their wives also. It was still an open question whether the last word should lie with the Public or with the elected Volksraad.

Autocracy has far more in common with democracy than either have with oligarchy, even an elective oligarchy. The Volksraad party in Natal, led by Stephanus Maritz, brother of the dead Gerrit, and Jacobus Burger, displayed a sound parliamentary instinct in guarding jealously against a combination of the people

with the military hero of the hour. It was the old story of the rivalry between the head of the House of Orange and the Estates-General in perpetual session over again.

The issue began to come to a head when Pretorius and Maritz quarrelled at law. Both men were from Graaff-Reinet, a district famous for its feuds, and both were good haters. Battle was fairly joined early in 1840 on the eve of the Cattle Commando. Encouraged by petitions that the Volksraad be declared expressly the supreme authority in the State, the Maritz party carried a law which rendered officials who opposed the Instructions liable to punishment for rebellion. Maritz then asked whether a Raad member could hold other office. The Instructions rather suggested that he could not, for under them the '*President van Politie*' was to have had a seat but no vote. No such official had ever been appointed, but Pretorius as Head Commandant had hitherto attended the Raad on that footing, and the Field Commandant of Port Natal had actually resigned office on his election to the legislature. The Raad therefore decided that on the whole it was better that its members should not hold other office, and, then, recalling that it had just achieved the quorum by co-opting an official, it decreed that provisional officials might still sit and gave the man in question provisional rank. But when it came to the point and Maritz asked whether the Head Commandant could sit, the Raad burked the issue. Let Pretorius first deal with Dingaan and then it would hear further of the matter.

Back came Pretorius in glory, the man on the white horse riding under the Arc de Triomphe, and at once it rained petitions that he should retain his military office and also have full Raad membership. The majority of the Raad launched a counter-offensive.

Henceforward there should be no permanent Head Commandant at all but merely one appointed for the duration of each campaign, and when field-commandants and cornets resigned in protest on all hands, it reminded them they must give the statutory three months' notice. The Republic's government must be carried on.

In April the Raad's struggle with the Head Commandant was advanced a stage. The Raad sat to hear the appeal in the suit Pretorius *versus* Maritz. An expedition against the Bushmen was pending and it postponed the hearing. At once Pretorius demanded to be relieved of the office of supervising trustee of the building fund for the Maritzburg church. The majority insisted that he must give three months' notice like any other officer, and then rather inconsequentially suspended him and his opponent from their offices till the appeal should have been heard.

That was, on the whole, a victory for the parliamentarians. They had at least avoided appointing Pretorius to lead the commando and were free to entrust the duty to young Jacobus Uys. On the other hand, they were checked severely when their rivals managed to dismiss Burger from his post as acting Raad secretary, and a large petition came in demanding new elections on the ground that the last had been irregular. The Raad countered by legislating against casual petitions. In future none would be accepted that were not the outcome of public meetings, and no such meetings were to be held without leave of the landdrost, or, if the landdrost wished to summon one, of the Raad itself.

The quarrel was now embittered by the controversies that arose out of the Zulu reparations. It would seem that crushing war indemnities have the peculiar faculty

of cursing him that gives and him that takes. The huge payments of cattle went far to ruin Panda's Zululand, and bred envy, malice and all uncharitableness in the Maatschappij on both sides of the Drakensberg.

Even before the campaign pessimists had grumbled that the distribution would not be carried out fairly, and, to silence them, a scale had been laid down: so many to the public chest, so many to those who had been robbed, and the rest to the fighting men. But when it came to the actual distribution, the Raad acted on the old frontier principle that claimants might take the cattle they could recognise as having been theirs. A wild scramble ensued. Thrusters went off with far more than they were entitled to, and late-comers and the less purposeful were left lamenting. Henceforward claims for compensation and complaints of wrong done echoed clamorously in Raad and court and market-place and were hardly stilled by the tramp of British infantry two years later.

The Raad met again in June 1840. If it was to hold its ground, it must do so against increasing pressure. A section of the public was calling for new elections; the field-cornets in a body were demanding that the suit between Maritz and Pretorius be dropped for the sake of peace and that Pretorius be made Head Commandant once more, and even Potgieter, who still declined to admit the authority of a Maatschappij from which he had broken away after the fatal *Vlugcommando*, supported the military party from distant Potchefstroom.¹

The Raad scored a point by reinstating Burger as secretary, but it had to give way elsewhere on a vital issue; there should be a general election in July even if that meant playing into the hands of the

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 49.

Pretorians. All it could do in self-defence was to stiffen the electoral laws. New-comers were arriving fast and Potgieter's intervention suggested the possibility of Natal being swamped by the High Veld. No man, therefore, was to vote till he had been a member of the *Maatschappij* for a year, nor stand for election till he had been a member for three and had acquired land into the bargain. Further, neither brothers nor brothers-in-law nor fathers and sons might sit together in the Raad, and officials must choose between their offices and their seats.

Pretorius, Napoleonic in this at least, began at once to pose as the proletarian's friend. He proposed that a Raad committee be sent round to recover reparation cattle from those who had taken more than their share, and that meanwhile all who had had their claims honoured in whole or in part should be invited to hand back one-tenth to give the Government something to work on, and be informed further that a subscription was about to be raised for the poor.¹

Military enthusiasm and Pretorius's plans for helping the tardy and meek sent back the Commandant's party in strength after the elections. A fiery session ensued. The new law of petitions had had the inevitable effect of multiplying public meetings, especially among the people at the Port. Not only were some of the resultant petitions highly irregular in form, but public meetings began to transfer themselves to the precincts of the *Raadsaal*. The Raad messenger, for all that defiance of his authority entailed a fine, failed to keep order, and, in September 1840, the Raad called for a daily guard of honour of a field-cornet and three men. When even that failed to prevent 'frequent great irregularities and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

confusion' in the House itself and in the landdrost's court, it called for an officer and ten men.¹

Not that disturbances were caused only by members of the public. Occasionally there were outbreaks on the floor of the House, as when the majority of the Raad declined to let one member take his seat till he be expurgated of the charge of having trekked from the Colony with another man's wife. The rejected one replied with such vigour that, as the pained secretary has recorded, 'it was necessary for the Raad to adjourn for an hour'.²

Scenes such as that were rare, however. The Raad had little difficulty in maintaining discipline among its own members. Indeed by the end of 1840 it was finding its feet. Helped doubtless by the gift of a copy of the United States Constitution from one of the American missionaries, it had developed its procedure by trial and error, fixed a reasonable franchise, regularised candidature and election, done something to instil a sense of duty into its officials, and even checked the vagaries of public meetings and petitions. Towards the end of the year it had the satisfaction of seeing Pretorius and Maritz drop their lawsuit by mutual consent.

That was, however, a mixed satisfaction. The reconciliation had been bought by Maritz's withdrawal from the Raad for a year to come on the plea of long service. The victory really lay with Pretorius and was like to be confirmed by war. For some time past there had been an outcry against cattle thieves on the southern border near the Umzimvubu river, and demands that Pretorius should take the field. In spite of the dogged resistance of the Volksraad party their opponents had their way. Pretorius was appointed Head Commandant. If he re-

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 73, 80.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

turned victorious it would be next to impossible to unseat him.

And yet there was hope. Jacobus Boshof, author of the constitution, had been dismissed from the Colonial civil service for political activities unbecoming to an official. He now arrived in Maritzburg to strengthen the hands of the Volksraad party and to become landdrost at the capital.

Side by side with the State the Church took shape. The constitution bound the Raad to keep a watchful eye on divine worship and education and to protect the Dutch Reformed Church as the 'chief church' of the community. The Raad did so faithfully but within limits. It would see to it that a house was provided for public worship at the capital, and granted an erf for the metropolitan church and another alongside it for the *pastorie*. It would also safeguard public morals to the extent of instructing the landdrost at the Port to proceed against one of the leading inhabitants of those parts for his 'awful and blasphemous expressions against the Supreme Being'.¹ But the Church was not to be the Establishment in the full sense; the salary of the minister must be furnished by the congregation. Education again the Raad did not presume to touch; that was emphatically the Church's business.

By the New Year of 1841 the little whitewashed church, fifty feet by thirty, founded at Maritzburg in fulfilment of the Blood river oath, was nearing completion, the *pastorie* was well under way, and a fully accredited minister had been found in the American, Daniel Lindley.

Lindley had been minded to serve the Maatschappij even before the Zulus had driven him and his fellow-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

missionaries from Port Natal in 1838. He had no illusions. For all that he saw the Boer point of view and had spoken up manfully for them in the Colonial newspapers, he would hardly have quarrelled with his fellow-labourer in the vineyard who believed that they were less prepared for independence than any South Americans of the day, and he was certainly of opinion that 'the salvation of many of the aborigines here can be secured only by giving a good measure of light first to the newly arrived inhabitants'.¹ He had returned to Natal with two of his colleagues in the second half of 1839 and presently offered his services to the Maritzburg Kerkraad.

There had always been a strong party opposed to the ministrations of Erasmus Smit, for, when all was said and done, he had never been ordained. That party had long hoped to attract a minister to Natal, or in moments of enthusiasm two, either from the Netherlands or from the Cape Colony. The hope died hard, but once it was dead and they had satisfied themselves that the Presbyterian Church (South) to which Lindley belonged was in all points similar to their own even to the extent of being domiciled in a land dominated by the slave-owner's mentality, the authorities accepted Lindley's offer. Poor Smit was ejected from the *pastorie erf* after something of a struggle and was given another erf, permission to minister to those who desired his services, and a pension which he lived to enjoy for twenty years. In January 1841 Daniel Lindley began six years of devoted service as minister to the Maatschappij in Natal first and then upon the High Veld also.

Beneath this superstructure of Church and State

¹ *Daniel Lindley to V[enable], Port Natal, 4 August 1839*, in the possession of J. B. Lindley, Esq., of Cape Town.

Boer society was spreading itself steadily over Natal. The Raad had a definite scheme of settlement. One area was to be occupied at a time and applicants were to take up land therein in order. At first the land at the Raad's disposal was that named in Dingaan's cession to Retief, from the Tugela on the north to the Umzimvubu on the south, but excluding the great northern triangle of present-day Natal that lies between the upper Tugela, the Buffalo river and the Drakensberg. Quite in the spirit of the Cape governors from the beginning until now, the Raad proposed to confine settlement to the northern half of its territory from the Tugela to the Umkomanzi river that entered the sea thirty miles south of Port Natal. There were few natives in those parts except round the Port; cattle were expected to do well in the coast-belt, especially those from the Cape coastal areas, and sheep would thrive on the higher ground a little back from the sea. Above all, the area was compact.

First-comers who had stood by the laagers in good times and in bad were to be privileged above those who had remained upon the High Veld or had fled back thither, and still further above late-comers, the *Nagetrokkene*, who had only left the Colony when the prowess of the Voortrekkers had made it safe for them to do so. And even among foundation members, married men with families and those who had suffered most at the hands of Dingaan were to have precedence.

Maritzburg, the capital, lay in the centre of this first area of settlement. As early as February 1839 regulations had been drawn up for the occupation of the future town, a good year before it was possible to break up the laager. The capital of Natal was, in theory, the headquarters of the whole Maatschappij. It was to

be specially favoured. There must be a concentration of population there. Hence, 300 erven, town lots of about one acre each, were granted freely to be drawn by lot. Family groups that desired to remain unbroken could draw for blocks of ten erven, while individuals who wished to sell out or shift from one erf to another could do so on payment of half a crown to the exchequer within six weeks of the conclusion of the bargain. Every holder of an erf must pay 7s. 6d. either on the nail or by note of hand at twelve months to cover the taxes on his holding for five years to come, and must also bear his share of the cost of leading water from the Little Bushmans river to the town. Each, moreover, must surround his erf with palings or a sod wall within two months, and sow it with grain or other profitable seed, and finally, so that the appearance of the town should be what it ought, build his house towards the front of the erf on a line to be indicated by some competent person.

Once the British had sailed away the surveyor¹ had set to work laying out the capital in good old Colonial fashion: a great parallelogram, one and a half miles by one mile, with nine broad straight streets cut across at right angles by five others and liberal allowance for a market-place and church square. Already the foundations of the church had been laid, a prison was in course of construction, a sturdy German had opened the first shop, a butchery as was fitting in a pastoral community, and lest there be a repetition of the disastrous fire and explosions of the preceding June, the contract for a stone powder-magazine had been given to one Jan Mocke, ex-schoolmaster of Beaufort West.

Church and shop, prison and magazine, the white

¹ J. A. Wahlberg, a Swedish naturalist.

man's civilisation had come to stay. But by that time all the erven at the capital had been snapped up; others, even men claiming Voortrekker privileges, must seek town plots on the Bay and pay for them. The Volksraad would give six months or even a year's credit; presently it offered two years' remission of rent to the very poor; but revenue the State must have.

The committee that had begun to lay out Gardiner's Durban in 1835 had marked out roughly plots of twice the accustomed size along the beach of the lagoon where the mainland narrows to run out to the Point. Some few of the 'old English' still survived, and the Raad agreed that they should retain their plots on payment of the average price of similar new erven. It then set about marking off large waterside erven and others of regulation size farther back. At the same time it founded a similar village at Congella, a mile or two farther up the Bay. There it acquired an existing house to serve as combined town hall and lock-up, and set volunteers to work building a palisaded laager under the shadow of the Berea hill. The first sale of erven at these two villages yielded good results, nearly £19 apiece for waterside plots and just under £4 for the rest. By the New Year of 1841, Port Natal and Congella, twin roots of Durban, were established firmly enough to warrant their inhabitants asking for a church and its attendant school.

But land to the Natalians meant farms rather than town plots. From the start the Raad was more busied with the granting of farms than with any other business. Voortrekkers, as foundation members, of course had burgher rights. In addition, all desirable persons including the English at the Port and sons of members of the Maatschappij on attaining the age of fifteen, could

acquire those rights by taking the oath of allegiance to Land and Folk. New-comers must also pay a fee of £3:15s. Burgher rights carried with them the claim to one or more full farms of 6000 acres, according to the burgher's standing, to be held in perpetual ownership. There were to be none of the variable quit-rents nor the sales by auction of the latter-day Colony, but merely a fee of 19s. 6d. for inspection and registration by a Raad committee and, thereafter, 18s. annually to the State in recognition of the protection it afforded. If farms were sold within three months, the State was to receive 4s. 6d. transfer duty and two per cent of the purchase price.

The original scheme was that married men who had been in Natal before December 1839, all widows of whatever age whose husbands had been slain, and all other widows unless they were young and childless or, a more delicate point to determine, old, were to have two full farms; the rest must be content with one. The Raad found it impossible to keep to its own rules. There were so many petitions and so many special cases to be considered, for this was South Africa where every case is apt to be a special case. A lad, a minor, who had borne fifteen assegai wounds since Blaauwkrans, was given a farm; the widow Retief was given three farms and then an erf at Maritzburg which she had promptly demanded by way of pension. A prominent field-cornet was allowed to buy the land on which his laager stood and all the ploughed land round it for £30. Pretorius acquired an extra piece of '*Colonie's grond*'. In the end the Raad had to agree that even youngsters of seventeen who had stood by the laagers in 1838 should have two farms like the married men.

The overthrow of Dingaan in the early months of 1840 raised new problems. Men trooped in from the

High Veld and the Cape Colony demanding two farms and an erf. At once the older inhabitants cried out that if two farms were to be given to those who had worked but one hour, three farms at least were due to those who had borne the burden and heat of the day.

The Raad did its best to satisfy the Old Guard without alienating the reinforcements. It made easy the path of the new-comers by setting aside blocks of 1000 acres as outspans along the main road; but it told them bluntly that they must be content with one farm apiece, which they must occupy within eighteen months and forbear to sell until they had so occupied it, and refused to give unattached immigrants without families even one farm till they had been a year in the country. It also tried to ensure that all members of the 1838-39 classes secured their second farms before new-comers were provided with any. But, as usual, it relaxed its own rules under pressure: a farm to a mother whose son had been killed at Retief's side; fullest burger privileges to Carel Trigardt, elder son of Louis, who arrived in Natal in August and, having received so much, promptly asked for more and got it; two farms even in special cases to *Nagetrokkene*. As against these concessions, however, the Raad took away the farm of one burgher, Voortrekker though he was, on the ground of non-occupation. But then this man had railed against the Maatschappij and had stigmatised its magistrates as men too stupid to do him right.

The successful campaign of February 1840 vastly enlarged the bounds of the republic and made it safe for men to settle farther afield than hitherto. Even before the campaign men had been itching to go beyond the Umkomanzi river into the forbidden south-west or fretting at the drifts of the upper Tugela in the north.

The Raad would not touch the lands beyond Umkomanzi yet awhile, but since new-comers from the High Veld were trooping into the northern lands beyond Tugèla and desired to trek no farther, it decided to throw open there the triangle of land that lay between the river and the mountains and the waggon road that led over them to the Suikerbosrand and Potgieter's Potchefstroom. But the allocation of farms by lot was deferred till Natal Voortrekkers had taken their pick, and *uitlanders* (word of ill omen) were forbidden to draw lots till others had been satisfied.¹

Meanwhile a great tract of land, three and a half hours' ride at its widest, had been marked out for a new village on the banks of the Bushmans river of unhappy memory. Soon men were at work building a road and digging a water-furrow with the prospect of first choice of erven as their reward. The village was to be called Weenen, the Place of Weeping, lest the people forgot how heavy the hand of the Lord had lain upon them there.

Thus 1840 passed with the Natalians, old and new, dispersing to their farms, and the Raad dealing as best it might with requests for the relaxation of the regulations, complaints by rival claimants, and charges of incompetence against its inspection and registration committee. Did honourable members recall the clamour that had gone up from the frontier districts in times past against the Lands Department in Cape Town?

It may have been so, but the Raad had matters of higher moment to engage its attention. Retief had always looked forward to building up a single strong Trekker republic. Pretorius had the same ambition and, encouraged by his success at the elections of July

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 71.

1840, took steps to unite the coastal and High Veld districts into a single state under the hegemony of Natal.

There were three separate High Veld areas to be considered: Potchefstroom, Vet River (afterwards called Winburg) and Transorangia. This last was the unorganised territory, claimed neither by the Colony nor the Maatschappij, that lay between the Orange and the Vet rivers. In high summer, on either side of the New Year, its monotonous plains of long grass lay yellow-green splotted with patches of mud and pools of standing water. Dongas gashed its surface, and deep trenches down which rivers roared in torrents of chocolate-coloured mud. Ant-heaps made pathetic attempts to break the sameness of the foreground and, in the distance, a dark blue ridge might tell of a rise in the ground that could claim the dignity of a hill. In winter the rivers trickled or ran not at all, the grass was burnt yellow-brown, the mud-patches were baked hard as iron, and there were no water pools, only the mirage.

The southern part of Transorangia was Griqualand, itself divided into two halves, Philippolis and Griquatown, whose chiefs and would-be chiefs were at the moment engaged in a complicated bickering, and whose inhabitants, in Philippolis at all events on the main Trek road, were gladly accepting guns and brandy from Boers in exchange for grazing rights. Moroko, the friend of the Voortrekkers, still lived in the eastern parts of Transorangia and was still friendly, but his greater neighbour, Moshesh the Basuto, was beginning to be worried by the fact that Trekkers whom he had allowed to rest on his lands were not proceeding on their way.

Mingled with all these folk were missionaries, the

usual transfrontier sweepings, and pre-trek Boers. The Transorangian pre-trek Boers looked more or less to Michiel Oberholster as leader. On the eve of the Cattle Commando, Oberholster had proposed to bring his people down into Natal, but the Raad, anxious to make sure of all the land it could for its own folk as soon as Dingaen should have been broken, had displayed no enthusiasm. Oberholster had therefore stayed where he was.

Nor would the Raad ratify the cession of Van Wyk's Vlei, a large slice of territory in what is now the western Free State, which one, David Fourie, said had been given him by a Koranna. Van Wyk's Vlei was far away, and what was the mark of a wandering Koranna on a piece of paper worth? Besides, it was from Transorangia, right under the noses of missionaries and Cape border officials, that many of the tales of wild doings drifted down into the Colony and there brought discredit on the whole Maatschappij. And one of the worst tales concerned Fourie himself. Finally, Transorangia was too close to the Colony for safety. Trekkers ought not to be encouraged to settle there.

But Vet River, the northern half of the future Orange Free State, was another matter. That district lay between the Vet and the Vaal. It was still almost as unorganised as Transorangia itself, but it was far enough advanced to be exercised about the precise line that should divide it from the lands of the Caledon river chiefs to the east. From the Natal point of view, it was of first-class importance, for it was the ultramontane hinterland of the northern triangle of Natal which was fast being occupied. Unfortunately Potgieter claimed it on the ground that in June 1838, after his withdrawal from Natal, he had bought it for forty-nine cows

from his old friend Makwana, who had merely retained for himself a small reserve near Sand River.¹

The third area was Potchefstroom, north of the Vaal. This was the main centre of High Veld settlement and the seat of Potgieter's authority. Potchefstroom, Vryburg, Mooi River Dorp, it was called by all these names, had been founded in November 1838. Potgieter himself lived on his cattle-run at Buffelshoek behind the Magaliesberg hills to the north, but it was from the long rambling village of Potchefstroom that he claimed to rule half the present Transvaal, half Bechuanaland and all Vet River district.

Immediately after Blood River battle Pretorius had been confident that Potgieter would throw in his lot with the Natalians. That expectation had been disappointed, if only because Potgieter feared that this might lead the British to extend their claim from Natal to the High Veld.² Presently, the Raad had dismissed Potgieter from his commandantship and claimed jurisdiction above the mountains.³ It had done so relying on the support of a faction at Potchefstroom led by one, Jacobus de Klerk. Him the Raad had made landdrost and, subject to confirmation by itself, had bidden him see to the election of six heemraden and the necessary military officers. Also, for lack of a qualified minister, the Raad had authorised a worthy burgher to serve as elder and catechist.

Landdrost de Klerk remained the channel through which Potchefstroom received instructions from the Raad, and through which Maritzburg received reports of the non-observance of those instructions on the High Veld. For Potgieter, the gaunt silent man, went his own

¹ *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke*, pp. 26, 30, 317. This book is the chief published source for the foundation of the High Veld republics.

² *Zuid Afrikaan*, 19 June 1840.

³ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 5.

way with the support of the many who were well content with his personal leadership and had small faith in elected persons. In Potchefstroom, as in Natal, politics turned on the rivalry between the parliamentarians and the military party. The Natal Volksraad party supported de Klerk. Conversely, it was Potgieter who came to the help of the Pretorians by requesting the reappointment of their champion as Head Commandant.

At length, Caspar Kruger, *voorsitter* of the Potchefstroom legislature and father of Paul Kruger, then a lad of fourteen, mediated between the rival local factions and, in September 1840, invited the Maritzburg Raad to treat for union. The Raad sent Pretorius and a companion to Potchefstroom, whence they came back in November with a treaty signed by Potgieter and a complimentary letter from Moroko desiring sempiternal friendship. Further, with Potgieter's acquiescence and Kruger's indispensable aid, they had arranged that de Klerk's court should continue to the north of the Vaal but that a separate court of landdrost and heemraden should be established at Sand river in the Makwana cession. They had also appointed a couple of field-cornets there and dismissed a third for his 'unheard-of and insolent conduct', but other weighty matters such as the beaconing off of frontiers and the inspection of farms had been left to the local authorities.

The main points of the treaty were that the two Maatschappijs of Natal and Potchefstroom were to be dissolved and then fused together into a single republic, one and indivisible, and that whereas Potgieter was to be director of the destinies of Potchefstroom, Pretorius was to be director-in-chief for the whole settlement.¹

¹ Draft among the papers of the late H. Bührmann in the possession of D. J. J. de Villiers, Esq., of Cape Town.

Details were filled in at a special session of the Raad early in 1841. Potgieter and Kruger both came down to Maritzburg for the occasion and agreed that Natal law should be applied as far as possible to the more elemental Potchefstroom-Vet River districts, and that Potgieter as Commandant should take his orders from Pretorius as Commandant-General. An Adjunct-Raad of twelve members was to sit at Potchefstroom to deal with local matters. But it was to be in no sense an independent legislature. It was to be simply a committee of the Maritzburg Raad, conforming to its procedure, sending its minutes and resolutions and the protests of burghers against them to the capital at the end of each quarterly session for review, and sending thither also a commission of two members twice a year to report fully. To emphasise the fact that the Adjunct-Raad was a mere committee, any of its members who might chance to be in Maritzburg were free to take their seats in the full Raad.¹

One thing, however, this enlarged Republic of Natal lacked: formal recognition by the Imperial authorities of its independence. The Raad had long been considering that question, and when, in September 1840, negotiations with Potchefstroom were far enough advanced to warrant it speaking for the whole Maatschappij from Port Natal to the Kalahari, and Vet River to the Zoutpansberg, it wrote fair and boldly to Sir George Napier at Cape Town asking him to receive two commissioners with full power to treat. It prayed that 'it may graciously please Her Majesty to acknowledge and declare us a free and independent people . . . and to cede to us all those privileges which constitute the boast and greatness of the nation which has the happiness to live under her noble government'.²

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 102.

² *Annals*, i, 611.

That letter reached Sir George in the midst of a long and anxious correspondence with the Secretary of State, Lord John Russell. There were those who reminded Lord John of the colonisable possibilities of Natal, of the value of Natal coal to the Indian navigation, and the danger that the Natalians might turn to Holland for aid. He had therefore told Napier that he was not opposed in principle to the annexation which Napier held was the proper solution, provided that it did not mean heavy expense nor injustice to natives. But when Russell heard that the troops had already left the Port, he approved and bade Napier treat Natal for commercial purposes as one of the 'foreign countries to the Eastward of the Cape'. In face of the Secretary of State's reference to Natal as a foreign country, Napier asked for precise instructions. Was he perhaps to negotiate with the republicans on that footing for a friendly alliance that would safeguard his vulnerable eastern frontier?

Had the Natalians but known it, that was the nearest they ever got to winning recognition of their independence. Unfortunately for them, news of the exploits of the Cattle Commando reached Downing Street. Without believing all he was told, Russell was highly indignant. He at once ordered Napier to reoccupy the Port, or at the least some commanding position near by, to put a stop to further bloodshed.

Napier was not minded to plunge his hand into a hornets' nest. Even though Russell promised him reinforcements, he would still have very few troops for the work. It would take 1200 men to hold all Natal as it should be held. Three hundred would be needed to hold the Port alone, and what was the Port but a dangerous lagoon blocked by a sand-bar and never likely

to attract anything more than a few coasters? As a Peninsular veteran, Napier dreaded a civil war which would breed bitterness and settle nothing.

It was at this stage that the Raad's request reached Napier. He replied good-humouredly that he was 'at present unable to understand in what manner the privileges of British subjects can be properly continued to, and enjoyed by, a people aspiring to political independence', but, for all that, he confessed his anxiety to promote the welfare of the Maatschappij in all ways compatible with the maintenance of the Queen's honour. He asked the Raad to make definite proposals.¹

The Raad made a full statement in January 1841.² It gently disclaimed the intention of asking for all the privileges of British subjects, but only for that liberty which was the pride of Victorian England. Nevertheless, its proposals did not leave many privileges unasked for. First, independence for the 'Republic of Port Natal and adjoining countries' whose boundaries should be defined thereafter, and a close alliance with Her Majesty's Government which should be represented at Maritzburg by an agent or ambassador. The Republic would promise never to aid the public enemies of England nor permit enemy ships to use its ports, but would stand neutral and leave all private merchant vessels unmolested. In case, however, the Republic were attacked from the sea, the British navy was to be at liberty to 'interpose itself either in a friendly manner or to repel the same by force'.

Further, to ease the Governor's mind about his ill-defended eastern frontier, the Republic would undertake never to attack any of the tribes that lay between

¹ *Annals*, i, 621.

² *Ibid.*, i, 627.

itself and the Colony without sending him fair warning, except of course in emergencies such as repelling inroads or following up robbers or 'such other cases wherein delay or neglect would be dangerous or prejudicial'. It would never extend its boundaries at the expense of any tribe unless that tribe had attacked it and thus rendered a rectification of frontiers necessary, whereas the Colonial Government should be free to move troops against the coast tribes through republican territory and might count on local transport and supplies. The Republic would encourage the spreading of the Gospel among the heathen and would neither indulge in the slave-trade nor comfort those who indulged in it. ~

✓ Finally, British subjects would be protected in their persons and property equally with burghers, and would not be subjected to higher taxes or duties than they. British goods would be admitted, preferably at British colonial rates, but in any event on the most-favoured-nation footing, except liquor and other articles (presumably guns and ammunition) 'prejudicial to this Republic', which must pay special duties. In return, the Natalians asked that their trade be put on a level with that of the Colony under the surviving Laws of Trade and Navigation. That trade might reasonably be expected soon to be of some importance. Already nine or ten schooners of 100 tons apiece had entered Port Natal during the past year.

On those terms, the Raad concluded, the Trekkers would be willing to forget all they had suffered and, by their future conduct, prove themselves as good allies as they had in times past proved themselves dutiful subjects.

Looking around in those early days of 1841, the

Natalians may well have rejoiced that the lines had fallen unto them in pleasant places. Everything, or nearly everything, was going well with the now happily reunited Maatschappij. Surely the Imperial Government would not refuse them independence. The good folk of Maritzburg at all events felt justified in celebrating the New Year 'with the greatest concord . . . races followed by a ball and supper'.¹

¹ *Annals*, i, 623.

CHAPTER VIII

THE UNMAKING OF A REPUBLIC.

The white colonists . . . were often told . . . that the tyranny of which they complained . . . was the price they paid for the power they enjoyed of tyrannising over their coloured classes. JOHN PHILIP

The discovery of coal in Natal . . . would appear to demand careful investigation. COLONIAL OFFICE

The interests of the British Government imperatively demand resistance to any other nation effecting a settlement in that country.

SIR GEORGE NAPIER

THE political barometer which had pointed to Set Fair at the New Year of 1841 swung suddenly down to Stormy. The force that swung it down was a failure in the Republic's native policy. Like every other South African government before or since, the Volksraad found that less than half its task was done when it had provided for the governance of its European citizens. There still remained the problem of the non-Europeans. White society in Natal must stand or fall by its success or failure in that field.¹

The Republic based its external native policy on the old Cape Colonial principle of segregation: whites to one side of the line, blacks to the other. Following in Retief's footsteps, it made treaties of amity with neigh-

¹ On Trekker native policy *vide Voortrekker Wetgewing. Notule* . . . 1839-1845 (ed. G. S. Preller); J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers* (1836-58); E. H. Brookes, *The History of Native Policy in South Africa*; E. A. Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 284 ff.

bouring independent chiefs such as Moroko and Moshesh on the High Veld and Faku down in the Umzimvubu lands, and arranged with them for the mutual return of missing cattle and the like. It looked askance at traders and missionaries who moved about in tribal lands, and sought to stop its own people going in thither without leave.

Internal policy was more complicated. It covered three classes of non-Europeans: semi-independent chiefs within the borders of the Republic, natives who were not under tribal control, and apprentices. From time to time the Natal Raad gave dependent chiefs reserves or locations in which they were to rule their own people under the general control of the republican authorities. Thus Pretorius 'located' the Zulus Jobe and Matawan and a group of Mantatis in the northern angle of Natal, and the Zulu Fodo in the south-west on the Pondo border; while, north of the Vaal, Potgieter indicated areas for tribes that returned from the hills and deserts now that the Matabele were gone, and for Barolong who followed him up from Moroko's country. But the corollary of location was transfer. Dependent chiefs were liable to be moved on if the Government required their land. Potgieter dealt thus with his Barolong and talked of doing the same with another clan, and, under its treaty with Panda, the Natal Raad had a lien on the southern half of Zululand.

Panda was the most notable chief of this dependent class. His treaty fettered his freedom of action severely from the first, and further restrictions were added as need arose. For instance, he was told that none of his people, other than embassies armed with the government pass, might come south of the Tugela, and that if they did come and committed crimes in Natal they

would be liable to execution. He might indeed deal with non-European criminals in Zululand as he thought fit; but he must send European delinquents back to the Republic for trial, an admirable local application of the Cape Punishment Act.

The Raad tried to enforce its segregation policy in the tribal locations. If it was to achieve the security which the Trekkers craved, it must keep unauthorised men and goods and ideas away from the natives. Guns, ammunition, horses and liquor were taboo, for it was possession of the first three that gave the Maatschappij its superiority over the tribes, and the effect of the last on raw natives was even more startling than on seasoned Europeans. The Republic forbade non-Europeans to carry guns or to take a drink without a permit from their masters, and imposed penalties rising to deportation for the third offence on all who should give guns to them.

Similarly throughout 1840 the Raad repeatedly stiffened the laws against illicit cattle-trade with Zululand. It did so in response to repeated complaints from the Zulu and the Port authorities that Europeans in the coast-belt, on one occasion actually officials of the Republic, were either sending or taking Natal Zulus across the Tugela and allowing them to barter or steal cattle and to damage native gardens into the bargain. The Raad forbade the traffic except when official leave was given. A European breaking the law would see his cattle confiscated and himself be liable to imprisonment; a non-European, if caught, would be sent to the public works in irons and, if he ran for it, be shot.

The men of God did not escape the restrictions which the Republic laid upon the worshippers of Mammon. There were Boers (there were Englishmen, too, for that

matter) who hated and distrusted missionaries as such, but the general attitude of the Trekkers and their governments was more reasonable than that. They revered missionaries as ministers of the Gospel and learned men. They had had nothing against many of them in the Old Colony, and they had found a good friend in Archbell on the High Veld and a still better in Lindley in Natal. At this very time, members of the Maatschappij on the outskirts of Potchefstroom were travelling 100 miles to hear a sermon from a London Missionary Society missionary. On the other hand, they still nursed bitter recollections of the Black Circuit long ago, of the real and supposed activities of Dr. John Philip, of Gardiner's imaginary machinations with Dingaan against Retief, and more recently still of the reports of abuses in Transorangia which Paris Evangelicals were sending down to philanthropic and official friends in the Colony.

The general attitude of the Natal Raad towards missionaries corresponded closely with that previously adopted by the East India Company and the British and Batavian administrations in the early days, a policy of benevolent suspicion. They would support the efforts of such as were indeed 'upright servants of the Word', but they would have nothing to do with those who set themselves up as political partisans of chiefs or as lords themselves of unruly non-Europeans whom they could not keep in order.¹

It was on those lines, therefore, that the Natal Raad advised Potgieter to allow Church Missionary Society men to go to one of his dependent tribes, and that, while Jervis and the Highlanders were still at the Port, itself allowed two of the American missionaries to

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 104.

collect Natal Zulus at their stations. They might do so, provided they took a temporary oath of obedience to the Raad and recognised that the mission-lands belonged in the last analysis to the Republic. Six months later, it gave Lindley leave to set up a mission in Zululand provided he took the full oath of allegiance. Even in January 1841, at a time when the Republic was full of rumours that the British were coming again, it agreed by a majority that one of Lindley's colleagues should go in his place on condition that he kept the authorities posted regularly and did nothing prejudicial to the Maatschappij.

Missionaries and dependent chiefs thus held their reserves on sufferance. The position of unattached natives and of those whose chiefs had no recognised reserves was still more precarious. In Trekker eyes they were either a labour force to be used or an encumbrance to be got rid of. The frontiersmen had always made it their aim to have 'a sufficiency of labour' on their farms, but not such numbers of natives that a man would feel himself pressed upon by alien human beings, his family endangered during his absence, and his stock, running on unfenced land, imperilled at all times. It followed therefore that not only must a stop be put to native immigration into European areas, but that, if Europeans were to go into a given area, redundant natives must go out.

There was very little trouble on this score at first, for there were very few natives in central Natal where the early settlement took place. But the tragedy of republican Natal was precisely that Natal was so nearly empty. Being Boers the Europeans could not occupy the country fully and, even though they were Boers inured to commando service, they could not keep the

natives out. By the middle of 1840 farmers were scattering along the coast-belt and in the northern triangle beyond the Tugela, while native refugees were also coming in steadily from Panda's country, many of them survivors of tribes that had dwelt in Natal before Chaka had made a desert there.

Presently, a leading burgher near the Port complained that 'Bushman-Kaffirs' had dug pits to trap game and had trapped one of his sons instead. The Raad therefore decreed that the landdrost must see to it that these people be put out to service at the rate of not more than five families to any one farm.¹

A few months later the Raad made this elementary Squatters' Law more general. Bantu captains in Natal were warned that they must hand over Zulu immigrants to the authorities on pain of death. As for the Port Natal natives, the Republic and Panda together were to move all who would not go to the farms away to empty lands in the north beyond the Buffalo river where both parties could keep an eye on them. Clans in the north might remain where they were for the present, except one or two which were recalcitrant in the matter of furnishing labour. These were to be brought in by a patrol and shared out, five families at a time, and if they resisted, their captains were to be sent to the public works in irons. Perhaps it was for the extra labour that must fall upon him in the execution of this scheme that the Head Commandant was permitted to have more than the five statutory families of squatters upon his farms.²

On the High Veld the authorities levied a labour tax even on dependent chiefs in locations. The Natal government did not go as far as that, but in time of stress it called up natives who lived outside the reserves for

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 37, 50.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

labour on the public works and tried to oblige unattached natives to labour at all times. Immediately after the Cattle Commando, when it was setting its house in order in so many directions, it provided that all unattached folk must enter into contracts of service before the landdrost for any period up to one year at a time, and, at the end of the term, contract to their old masters or to others within a fortnight.

Finally, there were the apprentices. Apprenticeship for a term of years and under safeguards, of orphans, of Hottentot children born on the farm, of other children with the consent of their parents, and of negro slaves rescued by the British frigates, had been a time-honoured practice in the Cape Colony. Most of it had been swept away by the reforms of 1828, but it was natural that the Trekkers should adopt it in their own republics.

Even before the Cattle Commando set out, the Natal Raad had directed that coloured apprentices should be duly enrolled by the landdrost on Colonial lines. On the return of that expedition with troops of young Zulus, it took further steps to guard against abuse. For the system did lend itself to abuse in a country where officials were few, police non-existent and public opinion always on the side of the white master. It was not so much ill-treatment that the Raad had to guard against as failure to register, understating of the age of the apprentice, acquisition of children from their parents by purchase or even by force, and trafficking in indentures with the apprentices attached. Such doings brought apprenticeship perilously near to slavery, which, in keeping with Retief's promise to D'Urban, the Natalians and, as far as can be known, the High Velders were careful to avoid. After all, they had never had

many slaves in the Colony and they did not need them now. Apprenticeship gave them very much the same kind of labour without the expense. Besides, anything savouring of out-and-out slavery would be the surest way of bringing the redcoats back.

In March 1840, therefore, the Raad forbade anyone to remove apprentices or any young natives whatsoever beyond the frontiers, except with special leave. It did its best to enforce the law. A landdrost's patrol recovered five such blackbirds from a trader; the Port captain, who had already let slip a notorious bandit, was dismissed for allowing two apprentices to be shipped to Port Elizabeth; these two lads were recovered with the help of the Colonial authorities and a swingeing fine was prescribed for all who removed or traded in apprentices.

Nevertheless, the apprentice system caused heart-searching. During the bloodless campaign against Dingaan in 1840, burghers had excused themselves rather shamefacedly to Delegorgue for wanting captive apprentices, but what would their wives say if they returned home empty-handed with labour so scarce? The majority had had no such scruples. The battle had been followed by a scramble for youngsters and loud demands for five *kinders* instead of two only, while such as had hesitated to take their share were questioned closely for thus tacitly criticising the custom of the country.¹

War lent itself to the acquisition of orphans. It was this unhappy combination of warfare and apprenticeship that brought the Republic into stormy waters at the beginning of 1841. The Trekkers had no mercy on cattle-raiders. No frontier society could have any. On

¹ J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, i. 627.

the eastern Colonial frontiers their complaint had always been that Government gave them neither adequate protection nor a free hand. Here there was no government other than their own. They were free to act. They acted and they split Natal, the keystone of the Maatschappij, from top to bottom and set the British troops moving slowly towards the Port.

For some time past farmers on the south-westerly confines of the settled area had complained of thefts, presumably by Bushmen. In November 1840, after hot resistance by the Volksraad party, which feared that attacks on natives on that side would alarm the Colonial Government and was loath to do anything that would enhance the importance of the military power, the Raad sent down Pretorius, hedged round with precise instructions, to deal with the thieves.

Pretorius found himself entangled in the local politics of the Umzimvubu country. That country was one of the most beautiful tracts in south-east Africa, high rolling hills covered with trees, mile upon mile of meales silver-green in the valleys, and rivers winding to the sea. The principal chief in those parts was the Pondo, Faku. At one time he had dwelt on the Colonial side of the river, but early in 1838, when the Trekkers had come down between himself and Dingaan, he had crossed to the easterly bank and established himself in territory which the Republic had since claimed in terms of Dingaan's cession to Retief. Faku had as counsellors a Wesleyan missionary, Thomas Jenkins, and Mrs. Jenkins, a lady of great strength of mind. He was important enough to have been recognised as an *amicus* of the Queen by D'Urban, and to have been courted by the Natalians also.

North of Faku's country was the stronghold of

Ncapaai, a Baca chief who had gathered broken clans around him and exercised some sort of lordship over groups of Bushmen. Sometimes he and Faku had combined to raid tribes in the direction of the Colony, sometimes they had fought each other. A scuffle of this kind was dying down when Pretorius came on the scene in December 1840 with some 260 burghers and the warriors of Fodo, the Zulu vassal of the Republic and neighbour of Faku.

Pretorius had failed to control his men at the end of the Blood River campaign. Here, without the excuse of a wounded hand, he again left far too much to his lieutenants. The commando failed to find the missing cattle. It then got into touch with Faku, the temporary enemy of Ncapaai, and against the wishes of some of its members and on evidence which amounted to little more than what Sarel Cilliers, with his paralysing stare, could extract from a captured Pondo woman, fell upon Ncapaai without warning. Some thirty Bacas were killed. Fodo's people carried off sheep and women, and the commando took 3000 head of cattle and seventeen 'orphans' who were duly apprenticed on their return home.

The Umzimvubu Commando returned home to find Maritzburg in a ferment and the Raad engaged in newspaper warfare. Someone had been writing, and both the *Commercial Advertiser* and the *Grahamstown Journal* had expressed themselves very bluntly on the alleged conduct of the Cattle Commando. Now there was reason to believe that Jenkins at Faku's kraal, and other Wesleyan missionaries, and Faku himself were appealing for help to the Governor because of the recent doings at Ncapaai's.

The possibility of British intervention had never been far from the minds of the Natalians. Ever since the

Cattle Commando there had been insinuations in the Colonial press that they dealt in slaves thinly disguised as apprentices, and latterly there had been open talk there of annexation. And now, just when Natal was uniting itself to Potchefstroom-Vet River and thus making itself responsible for the High Velders and their by no means blameless record, some of their own people had misconducted themselves under the very eyes of the Commandant-General in such fashion as to lay the Republic open to the charge of being a danger to the peace of South Africa and a dealer in slave apprentices. If these things did not bring the redcoats back, what would?

So January and February passed in furious debate and fear of British intervention. There were alarms. Three ships stood in towards the Port. The Highlanders had come in just such ships, and everyone felt for his gun. Then a steamship was sighted. The British were capable of anything, and excitement rose still higher. Nevertheless, the Volksraad men, Boshof and Carel Landman and Jacobus Burger, made a good fight. Backed by a petition from the Port and undeterred by the gift of part of the looted cattle to the church funds, they moved a vote of censure on Pretorius for disregarding his instructions during the recent campaign.

War-fever played straight into Pretorius's hands. The motion was talked out and the war party gained the upper hand. Petitions poured in from field-cornets and their followings breathing threatenings against all who had refused service against Ncapai, all who shewed disrespect for the Raad or others, and all schismatics and rebels. Pretorius saw to it that recalcitrants were fined in terms of the existing law. He also carried a much stiffer commando law that prescribed heavy fines, im-

prisonment, loss of lands and even deportation for neglect of commando service, and empowered the Commandant-General to impress goods and declare martial law. Then since Potchefstroom was being united with Natal, burghers everywhere on either side of the mountains were called upon to pledge themselves to defend 'our republic of Natal' against all comers, and field-cornets were instructed to make lists of those who refused to give this promise and to send them in without delay to the Commandant-General.¹

Warlike preparations were pushed on. Lead, muskets and a couple of cannon in a Cape merchant's store at the Port were bought or requisitioned; Kaffirs were set to cut bush paths and throw up earthworks, and the Commandant-General was given discretionary powers to send up some of the Port English out of temptation to the capital. There the Raad pressed on the completion of Mocke's powder magazine. At this critical juncture the vault collapsed, because Government had given him no lime, said the contractor; because it was badly built, retorted the incensed legislature. Kaffirs had to be impressed to build a temporary magazine of sods and timber, and steps taken to recover the advances made to Mocke,² with what result the record does not show.

The excitement subsided bit by bit. The British did not come. Then early in March came Napier's reply to the Republic's formal request for independence. It came to this. The Natalians had had his sympathy while they had been fighting for their lives against Msilikazi and Dingaan, but this Ncapai business was sheer bullying, an unauthorised attack by British subjects upon a chief and a threat to the safety of the eastern frontier.

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 107.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.

Troops were being sent, they were already on the way, under Captain Thomas Charlton Smith of the 27th, with orders to occupy a strong position in the Umgazi valley just to the west of the Umzimvubu, to protect the Pondos, who, Napier indicated plainly, were in his opinion rightful owners of much of the territory claimed by Natal.

Here was an end to all immediate hope of independence. Still, it might have been worse. At least the troops were not coming on to the Port. The Raad therefore sent a reasoned explanation to the Governor in which it watered down considerably the war party's strong defence of the Ncapai campaign, upheld the Republic's claim to the Umzimvubu lands, and rather welcomed the troops at that safe distance as a stabilising influence. As for what the High Velders might have done in the matter of apprentices, it pleaded ignorance and declined to meddle further.¹

After this fitful fever, peace reigned once more on the Pondoland front and the enlarged Republic began to go to pieces from internal weakness. Everything conspired to bring it down: the quarrels of the leaders, the failure of an inexperienced and emotional people to manage a highly flexible constitution, lack of reliable officials, lack of means of communication, lack of revenue from the inability of some and the unwillingness of others to furnish it, the burden of the unruly and distant High Veld districts, and the impossibility of enforcing a labour and segregation policy that presupposed a static society. The thing simply could not be done in a half-empty country into which white men and black were streaming from opposite directions.

Throughout the course of 1841, the simple govern-

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 119; *Annals*, i, 632, 635.

mental machinery provided for in the treaty of union was set up in Vet River and Potchefstroom. The land-drosts to north and south of the Vaal followed Natal procedure and, as far as they could, applied Natal law to the inspection of land, control of missionaries and traders, and game preservation. There were difficulties. Some of the High Velders did not seem to understand that their business must first go to the Adjunct-Raad at Potchefstroom and not direct to that at Maritzburg. Doppers in Potchefstroom objected to the form of oath in the courts and wanted quite unsuitable powers to be given to their Bible reader. But the chief difficulty was land.

The wildest confusion prevailed in both High Veld districts. The land claims of the early comers had never been registered and yet farms had been sold or bartered freely. All that could be done now was to uphold claimants who had actually lived or built upon their farms or had at least paid for them. For the rest the Raad was more anxious to people Vet River than to develop Potchefstroom. All good Natalians regarded the Transvaal as a mistake, an aberration on the part of Potgieter, but Vet River was their hinterland, the bridge between Natal and Transorangia and the Colony. Farms were to be given out there to married men, good sheep- and cattle-farmers. Let youngsters and others seek satisfaction elsewhere.

Towards the close of the year Pretorius had to hurry over the mountains. One of the High Veld commissioners for the distribution of reparations cattle was reported to be several hundred pounds out in his accounts, and Landdrost de Klerk of Potchefstroom, for all that he had resigned, was registering land titles in competition with his successor.

Pretorius found that more lay behind de Klerk's resignation than appeared on the surface. In response to the Raad's appeal to burghers everywhere to pledge themselves to defend Natal against the British, a number of High Velders had refused to do anything of the sort, and, when the Raad had directed that they should be given no land, had rallied their friends, driven de Klerk from office, held mass meetings and, with many accusations of partisanship against the Maritzburg Raad, had virtually declared the independence of the High Veld. Pretorius did what he could to placate the malcontents, but he must have returned home convinced that if it really came to the push, Natal could rely on very little help thence against the British.

Truth to tell, the land problem was almost as badly tangled in Natal as on the High Veld. Since his appointment as landdrost of Maritzburg in January 1841, Boshof had worked hard to regularise the land laws and to push on with systematic and genuine settlement, the closer the better. His difficulties were great. Pretorius had lost the records of land claims for 1839, and well-to-do men were speculating freely, buying cheaply occupied farms from poorer or more restless folk and also burgher rights to prospective farms more cheaply still. The Raad tried to check the abuse. Anyone in Natal who might wish to register a farm on the High Veld, or *vice versa*, must produce a landdrost's certificate that everything was in order, and all who dealt in claims beyond those they were entitled to would be liable to heavy fine or a year's imprisonment. Presently, the sale of 'rights' as distinct from actual farms was forbidden. But still the evil persisted.

Meanwhile the restriction of settlement to definite areas broke down. The Raad could not enforce its

laws. It was obliged to give an interpretation of the blessed word 'occupation' wide enough to cover a few native herds tending stock on the open veld, and to take in tract after tract of country over which burghers had already dispersed themselves. To the last it drew the line at Zululand proper since that must mean trouble with Panda, but, in April 1841, it opened the remainder of the northern apex of Natal as far east as the Buffalo river, and also the tract in the south-west of the Republic beyond the Umkomanzi as far as the Umzimkulu. But even that was not enough. Out ahead of the inspection committee jogging on its rounds went pioneers in search of pastures new, encouraged by official leave to occupy farms beyond the specified limits temporarily for hunting purposes with the prospect of a longer tenure if, for special reasons, the Raad saw fit. Dead and gone Cape governors could have told the Raad what must come of that.

At last, early in 1842, the Raad tried to call a halt to this dispersion. It would register claims down in the south-west as far as the Umtamvuna river, a long stage beyond the Umzimkulu on the road to Faku's kraals and trouble; but all the land beyond the Umtamvuna and all the land in the foot-hills of the Drakensberg and in the southern half of Zululand must remain closed to settlers. In answer to the outcry of its burghers on the spot who feared external competition in this restricted area, it agreed that no new-comer, married or single, should acquire land until he had resided in Natal for six months. Even so men went on staking claims right down to the Umzimvubu and far beyond the Tugela, in the lands claimed by Panda and Faku. Soon 1800 farms had been staked out, two or three for each family and the rest by unattached men,

11,000,000 of the 18,000,000 acres available in republican Natal.

The very speed with which the Boers dispersed themselves into the nooks and crannies of Natal, often a good fifty miles from the nearest road, made it impossible for the Raad to enforce its highly artificial labour and segregation policies. It did its best, but for lack of money, civil service, police and public approbation, it failed completely.

Throughout 1841 complaints of breaches of the apprenticeship laws became more frequent and legislation more drastic. No one, the Raad decreed, could lawfully claim possession of an apprentice unless he could shew a landdrost's certificate, and landdrosts must beware lest they register an apprentice who had been unlawfully acquired. So also with hunting and the cattle barter. Panda complained bitterly of men who went in with trains of Natal Zulus and stole or damaged his people's property. The Raad directed that no one should go hunting in native reserves in parties of less than five, and then only under a recognised leader and with a permit from the landdrost to whom they must report immediately on their return. The Commandant-General was even empowered to declare a close season for hunting game beyond the Tugela, and to canalise the native trade by organising periodical fairs at the Tugela drifts under the control of a republican overseer. Again the shades of old Cape governors must have winked and nodded at one another.

And always there was the segregation policy, the other side of the land settlement scheme. If Europeans were to go into a given area, and they were already going or gone, redundant natives must go out. That was fundamental. But it was not so easy of achievement.

Men of both races, black and white, objected. Long ago, in the middle of 1840, the Raad had warned the clans round the Port not to plant their gardens too diligently, as at the end of the year they must go either to the farms or to the locations. Six months later it was discussing anxiously with the American missionaries the best method of moving these people down the coast. Burghers at the Port cried out against this proposed removal of their labour supply, and already farms were being inspected far beyond the sites of the projected locations. The Raad therefore shelved the matter with the pious hope that at least those natives who had squatted at the Port since the Maatschappij had taken possession of Natal would go elsewhere.

Shelving rather than segregation was fast becoming the policy of the harassed authorities, but thrice before the British came back to hamper their freedom of action they were stung to action, each more sweeping than the last, by popular clamour. And, such was the way of it, each time they found the problem more unmanageable than before.

So far were native immigrants from moving away from the coast-lands that their numbers increased daily. In August 1841 the Raad resolved on heroic measures. The Commandant-General might sound local opinion as to the fate of old-established clans at the Port, but such of the remainder as were not in private employ must be moved down into the fruitful lands in the far south-west along the Umzimvubu, peaceably if it might be, but, if not, then by the whole strength of the burgher levy. That these lands were claimed by Faku and his Pondos could not be helped.

For some time after this resolve was taken Pretorius had been too much busied on the High Veld to face the

Sisyphean task, and when, at the New Year of 1842, he was free to undertake it, the trouble had spread from the coast-lands to the northern areas of the Republic. There the Weenen folk had long been troubled by Bushmen and, on occasion, by white cattle reivers also who made off with their spoils towards the High Veld, the obvious refuge of runagates. Now Zulus were said to be swarming everywhere in Weenen, sometimes by leave of the farmer but usually without, and for all that some had been shot as they ran or had been caught and sent to the public works in irons, the rest were armed and defiant.

The thing was getting serious. Here was the people, 600 or 700 families at most, and whereas at the time of Blood River there had been at a guess 4000 natives in Natal, now there were at least 15,000 and their numbers growing fast. The Raad gave comprehensive instructions. Kaffirs who were needed must be loaded with passes; Kaffirs who were not needed must go. No Kaffir was to live on a farm or in the immediate neighbourhood of one unless he were the servant of the occupant. A servant and, at the discretion of the Commandant-General, his wives and children also, must carry a pass which gave details of his human and animal possessions. He must also carry a personal pass, for lack of which he might be given to another master by any local official. He must not go for more than two hours' ride on horseback without a special permit from his master, for a mounted Kaffir was *ipso facto* suspect. Finally, if at the end of two years' service he wished to seek another master or go to a location, he must get a letter from his employer asking the nearest official to issue him with the necessary pass. As for redundant natives, the Commandant-General must see to it that by August 1842

at latest those in the north had been put across the Buffalo river, and those in the south despatched to the Umzimvubu lands. For the present, runaways, whether armed or not, were to be treated as enemies, while kraals to which missing cattle were traced might be burned.

However excellent or ferocious the laws of the Republic might be, the execution of them was spasmodic. It was bound to be so, for, apart from the members of the Raad, none of the officials other than the Commandant-General, the landdrosts and a couple of less important functionaries at the capital and the Port drew salaries. The rest must serve for the sake of prestige and from a sense of duty.

The inevitable weaknesses of such a system had revealed themselves from the start and they grew more obvious with time. Officials from the Commandant-General downwards were prone to resign at a moment's notice, sometimes for good enough reason, sometimes because they could not stand up to the assaults of their enemies, sometimes again because they thought that by resigning they could bring pressure on political opponents. There were good men amongst them: Boshof was one and Edward Morewood, an English burgher who first brought something like order to the administration of the harbour, was another; but too many of them were slack. The Raad had no assurance that its laws would be proclaimed in outlying parts; it had to call repeatedly for the statutory reports from its landdrosts and, when an official retired, it sometimes found it hard to make head or tail of his records and accounts, always supposing they could be found. Sometimes that was due to dishonesty, but far more frequently to plain ordinary muddle.

The Raad had its own internal troubles. The Ncapaa campaign and the British scare had so strengthened Pretorius's hands that, in June 1841, he had had to be confirmed in office as Commandant-General at a salary of £75. But the parliamentarians still tried to reduce him to an *ad hoc* officer and to deny him full membership of the Raad, efforts which he countered by threatening to resign at awkward junctures.

The Raad also did its amateur best to cope with the floods of appeals and petitions, for land and cattle mostly. It shewed itself ready to set white men free from irons and even to reduce sentences passed against non-Europeans. But the form in which business came before it was sometimes defective, as when the Council of War sent back from the Cattle Commando one burgher who was charged with persistent liquor-selling, and another who, being drunk and annoyed with a fellow-burgher, had relieved his feelings by shooting a sleeping Hottentot lad. In neither case did papers or witnesses accompany the accused; hence the Raad referred the liquor case back to the full landdrost's court, and itself discharged the defendant in the murder case '*onder reperment*', presumably with a reprimand.¹

In times of excitement the Raad occasionally referred cases to a jury of respectable burghers with orders that there should be no public meetings till they had delivered their verdict, and, such was the pressure of judicial business, it even talked of setting up a committee of the House as a court of appeal. In the event it kept business in its own hands and decreed that the quorum of the court might be made up by the co-option of bystanders. There was this advantage in so doing that the full Raad could pass a law to meet an unforeseen

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 36.

judicial contingency. Thus, when a certain criminal sentence came up for ratification, and the accused burst out with accusations and complaints, the incensed Raad ordained that all complaints must be presented to the secretary in writing and, further, that any burgher insulting a Raad member would run the risk of a heavy fine or a year's imprisonment, while a non-burgher would be liable to be fined, debarred for ever from acquiring burgher rights, and deported. And that, the Raad added, becoming a court once more, was the sentence passed on the present defendant, who collapsed, admitted that his accusations were a pack of lies, and, after some delay, was relieved at least of the sentence of deportation.¹

In short, Government in all its branches was rough and unready. To such a pitch had disorganisation and dissatisfaction come in the New Year of 1842 that the Raad was presented with a widely signed petition, a Grand Remonstrance, demanding reform. The Raad indeed rejected by a bare majority the hardy perennial that officials should be excluded; but, spurred on perhaps by the news that a leading inhabitant at the Port had just sold to the local landdrost a cannon which it claimed as State property, it agreed that a committee of two Raad members and two burghers should go into the question of the financial responsibility of all civil and military officials. It resolved also that civil courts on both sides of the mountains should be brought into line, and, further, it modified its own procedure. To check hasty legislation new measures could, at the request of any member, be postponed till the following session, and any other business till the following day. But it tactfully shelved the delicate problem of ensuring the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 86, 120, 122.

election only of sound and suitable candidates. That, it felt, was a matter rather for the electorate.

Signs of public and private poverty multiplied around the struggling Government. The people were gone to their widely scattered farms or were congregated in the villages. They were for the most part still dressed decently in spite of the exorbitant price of materials. In the more settled parts they had plenty of vegetables and two-year-old fruit-trees. Their cattle and sheep were doing well enough, and their horses had not suffered more than those in most parts of southern Africa from the recent epidemic of horse-sickness. But even so the two villages on the Bay, where the demand for erven was still brisk, were only collections of wattle and daub cottages, Weenen in the far north was as yet hardly as much, while only about one-third of the town lots at the capital were furnished with buildings of any kind, and of those few could be regarded as permanent. True, the Maritzburg church was in use and the watermill clacked merrily, but Fate seemed to be dogging the public works. Mocke's magazine still lay in ruins, the central gaol was not yet ready, and there was trouble with the contractor for the buildings at the Port. Nevertheless, in January 1842, the Raad called dauntlessly for tenders for the Port water-supply, and approved plans for a *Raadsaal* at the capital with a tiled roof if the contractor could compass it.

For these ambitious undertakings or for the ordinary expenses of government, Government looked to three main sources of revenue: land, customs and licences. All these sources were failing them.

Much of the land had been given to first arrivals free of all financial burdens for several years, and it was hardly possible to extract recognition or other payments

for any land, certainly not for erven, till title-deeds had been issued. And so far none had even been drawn up. Trading licences and customs duties went together; they were the internal and external indicators of the general state of prosperity or poverty. Shop and trading licences yielded a little revenue, liquor licences somewhat more in proportion to their numbers. Mining licences the Raad left alone for the time being. It had a salt-pan at the Bay, and salt was the mineral it needed first. It did allow one enthusiast to prospect for coal, but it would do nothing to encourage the search for the iron which Delegorgue had noted in Zululand. For a time customs brought in welcome money, and would have brought in more had not the Raad admitted the household stuff of genuine immigrants at a nominal payment of ten shillings. Latterly even this source had dwindled. Prospective immigrants had come and gone home again preferring to put up with life in the Old Colony rather than risk existence in Natal where there was moreover little good land free for them to take. Cape coasters put in more and more rarely. Hope had revived for a moment in August 1841 when the United States brig *Levant* entered the Bay; but she had sailed away disappointed from a community that could offer nothing but a few hides and a little ivory and apparently had no money to spend.

That was indeed the fact. The Natalians had never had great store of hard cash. What they had was dribbling away in payment for the few goods they must have, and, isolated as they were, they were not certain of acquiring more. They could not support their own Government adequately even if they would. Already the Raad had had to tell the good folk of Vet River, who proposed to build a magistracy, that the state of the exchequer

would not allow it to give any substantial help. By the New Year of 1842 the financial situation was desperate. Pretorius jeered openly at his elusive salary, and the Raad instituted a drastic economy campaign. It cut down its exiguous civil list of £500 by one-third, and clung despairingly to such unclaimed lands as yet remained to it. Those lands, it explained, were the only asset it had to meet the demands of those who had not yet been recompensed out of the Zulu reparations.

The State lands were not likely to remain an asset for long. Potgieter had recently pleaded the cause of ruined Voortrekkers who had not yet received compensation, and of these Potchefstroom seemed to be full, and the Raad had agreed that such men might have three farms on the High Veld or, if they cared to come down into Natal, two.

Reparations, the *damnosa haereditas* of the Cattle Commando, pressed more and more hardly on the distracted Raad. The vast mass of the spoil in cattle had been dispersed immediately after the campaign. Since then Panda had paid in his extra 15,000 head 'by few and few' and, in June 1841, the Raad, by a majority only, gave him his quittance.¹ An additional supply of 4000 or so had been acquired from Mantatis in the north a month before. Weenen men had reported that these people were herding what were probably Zulu cattle that should have been handed over eighteen months back. The Raad had had the beasts brought in on suspicion. It had then hesitated and ordered further enquiry. The enquiry was effected promptly. Next day chief Matawan, who had been fined on Mantati evidence for this very thing after the Cattle Commando,

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 135.

swore that the Mantatis had then gone off with Zulu beasts. The Raad, again by a majority only, rewarded the patrol and confiscated the cattle.¹

The Raad next appointed a commission to supervise the distribution of these reparations and, since very little had come of Pretorius's invitation to those who had possessed themselves of too many beasts to hand back a proportion, it sent one of its own members out with a commission of Quo Warranto to see to it that cattle unlawfully held were given to their rightful claimants. Then, in January 1842, to placate those Natalians who asserted that many of the cattle which Potgieter and his staff had already distributed on the High Veld properly belonged to Natal, it ordered the Adjunct-Raad at Potchefstroom to make enquiry and send the cattle down, and sought to stave off claimants by pointing to its commissions whose heavy work called for public patience and co-operation rather than for criticism. Let claimants hand in attested claims and something might be done; but, frankly, there was not much hope.²

The Raad despaired too soon. Pretorius announced that there were great droves of cattle near the sources of the Vaal above the Drakensberg which might well be beasts that had been driven off during the Cattle Commando. The Raad ordered them to be brought in, leaving it to the discretion of the Commandant-General to allow those who now had possession of them to retain milch cows and other beasts that might suffer by travel.³ Finally, there were Panda and Sapusa the Swazi, the Republic's late comrades in arms against Dingaan.

The Raad had met for this January session amid

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 129, 133.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 171.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

great public excitement. Not only were there the constitutional and administrative issues raised by the Grand Remonstrance, but native affairs were positively alarming. Weenen members had been given leave of absence because of the unrest in their district where Bushmen were raiding and the Zulu Jobe was fighting a neighbouring chieftain, while outlying farmers in the coastlands were drawing together on defensible farms or were even coming into Maritzburg in response to rumours released by the Commandant-General that Panda was planning a surprise attack upon the Republic.

The Panda scare soon evaporated in the security of the capital, and the Raad resolved that an agent should be sent to live at the Zulu court as soon as a suitable man should volunteer for that risky honour. Next day came a request from Panda himself for leave to attack Sapusa who was withholding cattle that lawfully belonged to him. The Raad gravely forbade their vassal to take any action, but seeing that many of Dingaan's cattle had been driven across the Pongola in 1840 and had never been handed back to the Maatschappij by the Swazis, a deputation should go to Swaziland to demand them of Sapusa. If he complied, well; if not, the Republic would discuss with Panda a joint expedition to take them by force.¹ Cattle to meet its burghers' claims the Republic must have.

Then, on the last day of this anxious session, a bomb-shell far-flung by Captain Smith from his camp on the Umgazi river burst at the feet of the astonished Volksraad. It was a proclamation by Sir George Napier dated December 1841, announcing that whereas the Raad's decision to thrust masses of Natal natives without their consent down into Faku's country without leave of that

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 167, 171.

chief had led him 'to apprehend that warfare and bloodshed will be occasioned', he was sending troops at once to reoccupy Port Natal.¹

Napier had long had permission and, latterly, orders to do so. For Russell had not only digested his reports on *l'affaire Ncapai*, which called for action under the recently enunciated policy of protecting threatened tribes, but also the warnings of the Emigration Board of the dangers that might spring from contact between a coastal republic and foreign powers.² But Napier had held his hand as long as he could. He still had a poor opinion of the possibilities of the Port; his frontiers east and north were disturbed, and he had neither men nor money to spare for a distant and troublesome dependency. Three things determined him to act: the risk of foreign intervention suggested by the recent visit of the American brig to the Port, the threat to his eastern frontier conveyed by the Republic's wholesale segregation policy, and his belief that many burghers in the troubled Republic would welcome British authority.

On receipt of Napier's threat and the warning that Natalians, as British subjects, would incur dire penalties if they resisted Her Majesty's troops, fear, rage, suspicion flared out uncontrollably at Maritzburg. The Raad was divided against itself. It was not sure of support from the High Veld nor even from Natal as a whole, and it was certain of the veiled or open opposition of most of the British in the coast-belt. Smelling out of traitors to the Maatschappij had never quite died down since the Ncapai controversy. Now, it assumed serious proportions.

¹ *Annals*, i, 658 ff.

² *Ibid.*, i, 640, 649; C. J. Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, pp. 3 ff.

Boer suspicion of some of the Port Natal British was well founded, but that it was so was partly their own fault. When Retief, and afterwards Landman, had come down to the Port, they had given the handful of English there to understand that, though the Republic must be a Trekker state, their claims to land would be specially considered. So long as the Highlanders had been at the Port, it could hardly have been expected that the British would take the oath of allegiance, for they were British subjects in a more intimate sense than were the Boers. Even so the republican authorities had not concealed their suspicions of the dealings of some of them with the Zulus.

After the troops were gone, one or two Englishmen took the oath, but the majority of them either did not trouble to do so or evaded the duty. There was little to encourage them. The troops might come back, the local authorities were not cordial. At the first sale of erven at the Port in June 1840, Henry Ogle and Toohey, chieftains of Zulu clans, and Richard King were expressly forbidden to buy.¹ Meanwhile, William Cowie, a Scots mechanic who had married an Afrikaner wife, had first been suspended from his office as field-cornet at the Port for airing his opinions too freely on the eve of the Cattle Commando, and had then been limited in his choice of a farm to the immediate neighbourhood of the Bay. Andrew Biggar's widow, whose husband and two sons had been slain at the side of the burghers by Dingaan's warriors, was told blandly that her late man's farm had been granted to another and that she must seek compensation elsewhere. In August 1840 when trouble had been brewing on the southern border, 'the old English' at the Port were informed

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 52.

that if they wished to go to the Cape Colony, and some of them did, they must go either by sea or by way of the Drakensberg passes and under no circumstances through the Pondo country.¹

The Natalians' suspicions of Cowie were justified, for he was undoubtedly one of those who gave the Cape newspapers and, indirectly, Napier much of their information about the Cattle Commando and black-birding generally. But their worst suspicions were directed elsewhere. During the British scare that had followed the return of the Ncapaii commando, the Raad ordered the Commandant-General to send up Ogle, King, Toohey and others of the English out of harm's way to the capital, and to use his discretion about sending up the rest.² Since then, Toohey at least had been in Grahamstown dilating on the coal, lead, indigo, cotton and tobacco of Natal and the loss to the Queen's prestige in the eyes of the tribes if Natal were not annexed. And now, with Smith's troops preparing to march against the Port, the Maritzburg authorities believed that some of these men were telling the natives that the British were their friends and that Boer lands would be the reward for their support of the British. Certain it was that Ogle had gone with his folk to live on the Umkomanzi far down the road to Pondoland along which the troops must come. Let each honourable member, the Raad decreed, take oath that he had never given anyone, official or other, outside the Republic cause to believe that he wished their independence to be tampered with.

That done, the Raad debated the answer that should be sent to Napier's proclamation. All could agree to repudiate British citizenship and Faku's claims to the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 20, 77.

² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Umzimvubu lands, and to give fair warning that all expenses, hurts and damages that might ensue from a military occupation would be charged to Great Britain's account. But when someone raised the dangerous question of the command, Pretorius sprang up and threw public duty to the winds.

He had played his trump card of resignation in the preceding October, when the Raad had needed his services on the fissiparous High Veld and had been faced with a letter in which Napier offered liberal treatment on the score of land and trade if the Natalians would admit the troops peaceably. He had got his own way then and he proposed to get it now. He had gone to law once more with Stephanus Maritz over an erf and its water rights, and Voorsitter Boshof as landdrost had recently given judgement against him. He now launched an unmeasured attack on both Boshof and Maritz. They were plotting to do him wrong and to take away his office by a snatch vote, but he was finished with all of them. He was going to resign, though what the consequences of that would be he feared to contemplate, for where would they find a man who could lead the burghers as he could? Then, a parting shot as he went out, they could deduct his fine for refusing Raad duty from the salary which he knew they could never pay and give the balance to the church.¹

The dismayed Raad broke up, the war party to work for Pretorius's reappointment, the Volksraad party, backed by a Committee of Public Safety, to prepare for the coming invasion. As a first step they appointed a provisional Commandant for the capital and district, and then to their great relief learned that the troops would make no move till March. After all, they were only

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 182.

150 all told and must await reinforcements; the rains were on; the rivers were in flood, and the roads were impassable to a column with guns and waggons. There was time at least to test public opinion by means of public meetings and petitions.

The full Raad met again in the middle of February to consider these petitions, strange documents some of them, several signed by single individuals in their own right, others by a local official for himself and all his folk, others more regular, and all breathing a more or less resolute defiance. They were not altogether satisfactory to the Raad. That from the Port was not so enthusiastic nor so unanimous as could have been wished, and others, from Weenen and the High Veld particularly, demanded that Pretorius be reinstated. 'Where', asked the petitioners, 'is there a man like unto him to go against the foe? Why lose him for the sake of a little bit of land?' ¹ The Volksraad party bowed to the inevitable, halfway. Pretorius should be Commandant-General, but only for the duration of the war, and he must wait for his salary till outstanding debts had been wiped off. Nor would they budge further for all the pressure which Pretorius and his friends kept up till the British were well on their way to the Port.

Folk at the Port were divided on the score of resistance, for it was the Port which would take the first shock. But at the capital, sixty miles from the coast and with all the defensible Valley of a Thousand Hills between, warlike enthusiasm was unbounded. A dignified reply, penned by Boshof, was sent to Napier on the lines already laid down and a warning that the troops must expect resistance. 'Experience', wrote Boshof,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

'has . . . given us all severe lessons', and then, perhaps remembering Pretorius and his ways, he added cautiously, 'more or less'. Whatever its internal political differences, the Maatschappij would come together to defend its hardly won homes and liberties.

Boshof must have made that proud boast with some heart-searchings, for the Raad still had to consider the demands of the Potchefstroom party of independence. But these must wait; the present need was defence. Reminders were sent to every part of the Republic that all who had resided for three months within its borders were liable for military service, and must not leave the Republic under pain of heavy fine so long as invasion threatened. Natal even began to look with a hopeful eye to despised and chaotic Transorangia. A strong hint was sent to Jan Mocke,¹ Michiel Oberholster and other leaders in those parts that help would be acceptable. Let them beware how they gave the Cape Government cause to intervene north of the Orange, but rest assured that, if intervention were to come, Natal would stand by them without presuming to meddle with any questions of land rights. Thus might they all look forward to becoming one united Maatschappij from the Orange drifts to Port Natal.²

The Raad then appointed a strong committee with power to add to its numbers, and issued precise and secret instructions to the Commandant-General. If the troops came, he must first protest in writing and then harass them by driving off their draught animals or otherwise. He must not offer battle till his own force was large enough to give him a good chance of success or unless a Heaven-sent opening presented itself. But

¹ Not the unlucky contractor (*vide supra*, p. 245), but an ex-field cornet of Beaufort district.

² *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 193.

if the enemy shewed the slightest sign of marching on the capital, he must resist at all costs. The Port was one thing; the capital, headquarters of the Maatschappij, was another.¹

Finally, since the British could not drop from the skies, there might yet be time to settle accounts with the Weenen Bushmen and with Sapusa. The Weenen men might go against the Bushmen, and Pretorius might intervene, if he saw fit, between the warring Jobe and his adversary. Panda was to be told that his request for leave to recover cattle from the Swazi king could not be granted, but a commission was to go to the Swazi king to demand those cattle on behalf of the Republic. If Sapusa gave them up readily, a percentage might be restored to him; if he gave but meanly, then nothing. But of whatever he gave, the commission might hand one-third over to Panda and turn the rest into the reparations account.²

So the weeks passed with reports of reinforcements moving slowly overland from Grahamstown to Smith's camp on the Umgazi, and more hopeful rumours, echoes of the recent British disaster in the Khyber Pass, that all the troops were being called home to fight the Russians. Then a wind of hope blew in from the open sea. In the last days of March, the Dutch schooner *Brazilia*, commander Captain Reus, stood in to try her luck. The crew of her long boat landed armed for fear that the troops had anticipated their arrival. They had with them an astute and pushful young supercargo, Johan Arnaud Smellekamp.³

Netherland interest in the Trekkers and especially in Natal had been awakened by Jacob Swart, elder of one of the Amsterdam churches. He had interested

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

² *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 198

Messrs. Klyn & Co., also of that city, who had loaded the *Brazilia* with a representative cargo of Dutch products ranging from cheese and gin to legal works, and had instructed Smellekamp to push trade and to study the new republic in all its moral and scientific aspects. To that end they had furnished him with a letter to the republican authorities adorned with 'broad gold edging and many ribbons', and copies of a prospectus that had been written by G. G. Ohrig, one of their partners, in the mingled strain of patriotism, financial optimism and piety proper to projectors of commercial empire on a shareholding basis.¹

News of the *Brazilia's* arrival spread like wildfire. *Oranje boven!* Here was Old Holland coming to greet and maybe to help a community that boasted of its Netherlandish descent, that flew a flag so like Holland's own, and that had in its midst men who had trekked from the Colony in waggons gaily painted with the colours of the famous House of Nassau. Smellekamp made his joyous entry into Maritzburg without delay. Men rode far out of the town to meet him and dragged his waggon to the central square past houses decked with such gay hangings as they had. Then began a round of public meetings, thanksgiving services, and public dinners, with toasts to King William and 'Down with the British'. In the course of the oratory Smellekamp realised that his simple hosts still thought of Holland as the naval power that in times past had fought England's boasted warships on level terms. Business is business and he made the most of their credulity. He judiciously distributed copies of Ohrig's pamphlet, presented his letter, and discussed the future with the Volksraad.

¹ 'The Emigrants at Port Natal' (translated), *Annals*, i. 667 ff.

The Raad eagerly promised Klyn & Co. a plot of ground at the Port, a full farm elsewhere, and duty-free entry for their goods other than liquor, guns and ammunition. From its side it asked for predikants to serve at Port Natal and Weenen and funds for their support during the first few years, for schoolmasters, and for 500 families to form a close settlement at the Bay. Land there would be granted on most favourable terms, Hollander immigrants should acquire burgher rights without payment of the statutory fee, while all should have the right to take up 1000 acres in such areas as were still open and to buy as much more land as they liked anywhere. Most of the land in Natal, the Raad explained, had already been given out, but it was still largely unoccupied and full farms of 6000 acres could be had for anything from £37:10s. to £75.

Thus encouraged, Smellekamp took his plunge into the seas of international politics. He persuaded the Raad to give him copies of its official correspondence, and to sign a treaty entrusting land and people to the King of the Netherlands, subject, very properly, to His Majesty's ratification. Might that come soon, for the troops were already on the march from the Umgazi.

Smellekamp returned to the Port and tried to auction his goods. This was the least successful part of his visit, for the Natalians, as before, had little to spend and he had little to offer from a cargo that had been prudently selected with an eye to the known market in the East Indies rather than the remote and uncertain market of Natal. There was not much demand in the Natal of those days for eau-de-Cologne, cigars, Rhine wine, paint, glass, feminine finery and jurisprudence.

Undismayed, Smellekamp arranged to go home by way of the High Veld and Cape Town, and his ship

made ready to sail for the Indies. Her crew had landed in arms; they now departed with cudgels in their hands. The coming of Hollanders in truculent mood had not improved the temper of the British section. George Cato, the leading man among them at the Port, was also agent for a Port Elizabeth firm. He did not approve of the activities of Klyn & Co. Therefore, just as the *Brazilia* was about to weigh anchor, he and a friend carried off the official flagstaff so that the national flag could not be dipped in response to her ceremonious salute. Reus and his men dashed ashore, caught Cato's companion and beat him unmercifully, but, as they reported to the indignant Raad, 'the cowardly Cato' foiled their efforts to uphold the honour of Old Holland and the new republic by running away.¹

The Volksraad assembled during the last week of April for what was destined to be its last untrammelled session. Encouraged by the fair and false hopes held out by Smellekamp and by the knowledge that Smith's little column was likely to be held up by the flooded Umkomanzi, it decided to put its land grants on a sound legal footing while yet there was time. Landdrost Boshof arranged with one of the American missionaries to print him blank land-titles, and the Raad at last settled the long-standing land dispute with the Port Natal British. It declined to uphold Dingaan's land grants or to give claimants further time to regularise their position. Apart from the recent flag scandal and the fact that some of the British were with Ogle beyond Umkomanzi waiting to welcome the troops, their land would be very useful if the Smellekamp closer settlement scheme came to pass.

Since the Raad was dealing thus hurriedly with

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 202; G. E. Cory, *op. cit.*, iv, 134 n.

European land it must deal also with redundant natives. The Weenen men reported that they had punished their Bushmen, but the usual complaints of insecurity were coming in from elsewhere, and something must be done to establish the public peace and give folk a chance of obtaining labour for their farms. The Raad ordered Pretorius even at this eleventh hour to push on with its eight-months'-old scheme of wholesale segregation.

And then, with Smith on the march and the outer world present at their councils in the person of Smellekamp, there came disastrous news from the High Veld, news well calculated to justify all that officials and philanthropists had ever said in disparagement of Afrikanders and to confound the Raad's efforts to establish the Maatschappij's 'blameless and law-abiding behaviour towards heathen folk'. Two-score men in the Drakensberg had declared their independence of the Maatschappij. They had called upon all and sundry to take a share in their venture, and had then crossed the upper Vaal, killed some Kaffirs, and brought away cattle and apprentices.

The Raad was in despair. It ordered the fullest enquiry, the return of the children to their parents and the cattle to their owners, and the condign punishment of the guilty. Deeds like this, it asseverated, 'open the door to robbery, murder and all kinds of violence, to the despising and trampling underfoot of all lawful power and authority, and in the last result to the overthrow and destruction of the whole Maatschappij'.¹ Excellent well said. Napier himself could have said it no better. And here were the Queen's troops to point the moral.

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 206.

Captain Smith's column, 250 men of all arms, had made slow going, but at last, in the first week of May 1842, it reached the shores of the bay. There it halted for a day or so while scouting parties sought for a camping site, and Captain Smith rode to the Point with an escort to haul down the republican colours and the Netherlands flag which fluttered protectingly above them, and to hoist the Union Jack with full honours. Next day the column threaded its way along the bush-clad track that ran round the bay. As it reached the edge of the townlands the drums struck up and the troops marched to attention: redcoated Inniskillings with bayonets fixed, Royal Sappers and Miners and artillerymen in blue and gold striding alongside two mudsplashed six-pounders and a light howitzer that thudded and jingled behind plodding spans of oxen. After them came the long waggon-train with attendant swarms of natives, English drivers from Albany smoking and cracking jokes, wives and children of the officers and N.C.O.s, including two babies born *en route*, and the Rev. James Archbell, sometime of Thaba Nchu, and his family. Last of all rode Captain Henry Warden and his slim swarthy troopers of the Cape Mounted Rifles in dark green jackets and brown trousers, sitting their horses very straight and solemn. Round they came to laager their waggons just where the mainland narrows.

The trumpets clanged above the thunder of the surf. The parade dismissed. The second British occupation of Natal had begun.

CHAPTER IX

THE SECOND BRITISH OCCUPATION OF NATAL

How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

2 KINGS XVIII, 24

THE campaign had begun badly for the Republic. Here were the troops in possession of the Port with never a shot fired nor one of their draught cattle driven off, and nothing more in the way of harassment than a letter of protest which their commander had coldly refused to open.¹

The Commissie Raad did what it could. It dashed off a call for help to Potgieter. There was not much hope of that, for the last Maritzburg had heard of him was that he was about to lead his Potchefstroomers away beyond the Limpopo in search of Christians, survivors perhaps of the Liebenberg tragedy of 1836, who were said to be in the hands of the Matabele. Still, something might come of it, and meanwhile Pretorius must hasten down to the Bay and wait there till reinforcements and the full Raad could join him.

Pretorius fixed his headquarters at the tiny village of Congella. He found Smith's men building huts and throwing up earthworks round the cannon at each

¹ *Voortrekker Wetgewing* (ed. G. S. Preller); J. Bird, *Annals of Natal*, ii, 705-32; J. C. Chase, *Natal Papers*, ii, 207 ff.

corner of their triangular laager, and the Captain himself turning an orderly officer's eye on anyone who questioned the right of the troops to enter any part of Her Majesty's dominions or who spoke of the Republic's alliance with Holland.

Burghers rode in day by day to Congella till Pretorius's force slightly outnumbered the troops, and day by day relations grew more strained. Smith was frankly worried that he had not received the local support nor even the sure prospect of a peaceable occupation which Ogle and Cowie and Cato had held out to him and indeed to the Governor. He decided to make a demonstration and rode out at the head of 100 men. Pretorius met him and assured him that he would stand fast till the Raad had assembled, and Smith turned back believing that Pretorius had meant that his burghers would disperse to their farms. So far were they from doing so, that a day or two later, some of them rode armed and jeering among his working parties. Smith, really angry this time, withdrew his men to camp and threatened to clear the Boers out of Congella if anything of the sort occurred again.

So matters dragged on. Smith requisitioned flour of which he was very short, and the brig *Pilot* brought in military stores and two eighteen-pounders. Smith transferred one of the guns and part of the stores to his camp and left the rest on shore beside the vessel under guard. At Congella Pretorius's force grew daily and on 16 May the Raad assembled there.

Averse to bloodshed, uncertain of the result at a time when no frontiersmen had ever attacked the regulars since the far-off days of 1795, reluctant to strengthen the hold of the Commandant-General on popular affection, nervous perhaps at the thought of putting their

people in the position of rebels, the Raad tried repeatedly to induce Smith to go or at least to mark time till he could get fresh orders from the Governor. Smith refused. He had his orders and he must obey them. Badgered by some of its own followers and still more by their wives, the Raad at last ordered Pretorius to clear the troops out.¹

'Time', Napoleon had once said, 'is everything'. Pretorius had been trained in a different school. He made no move for four days during which the Port Elizabeth trader *Mazeppa* cast anchor alongside the *Pilot*. Possibly fear of what she might have in her hold stung him to action. On that same day he gave Smith one last warning, delivered a Thucydidean oration to his followers, and then sent some of them to drive off Smith's draught oxen which were grazing quietly outside the camp. After some scuffling the party returned with most of them.

That meant war. Smith did not keep Pretorius waiting. He mounted his howitzer in a boat and bade the sergeant in charge get as close in shore as he could, and at midnight marched with every available man and his two field guns along the open beach towards Congella.

The Boers, always on the watch, saw Smith's column coming. They took cover among the tangled mangrove roots that fringed the shore, and opened fire at short range in the bright moonlight. After the first confusion the disciplined troops formed up and returned the fire. But service muskets were no match for the Boers' heavy guns, men and oxen fell fast round the six-pounders, other oxen broke from their traces and dashed bellowing through the ranks, the water was too shallow to

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 208 n.

allow the boat with the howitzer to get into action, and Smith had to order the retreat.

The troops regained their camp unmolested but they left behind them forty-nine dead, wounded and missing and both their cannon. All that night the burghers fired at the British laager and withdrew at dawn.

Pretorius had lost only one man, but he had also lost a golden opportunity of destroying Smith's force. Thereafter he wasted two more days and a fatal night, courteously returning the wounded to the British camp and watching the soldiers bury their dead. It was then reported to him that two mounted men had slipped away from the English side of the Bay by night and ridden off full tilt along the Pondoland road which was also the road to the Colony.

Pretorius determined that no more Englishmen should go. The *Pilot* and *Mazeppa* still lay at the Point, the second eighteen-pounder and a good many of the military stores lay on shore close by under guard of a score of soldiers, while on board the little ships were most of 'the old English' including Cato of flagstaff fame, Ogle, Toohey and others who were wanted by the republican authorities. On the night of 25 May, the Natalians rushed the guard, not without killing, captured both vessels, and sent sixteen soldiers, nine civilians, more than £500 in most welcome hard cash, and fifty-six waggon-loads of booty to Maritzburg. But they were too late by twenty-four hours to capture Dick King. By that time he and his faithful Zulu retainer, Ndongeni, were well on their way to give the alarm at Grahamstown.

Pretorius now suggested that Smith should sail with his men on the two captured vessels. Smith asked for a week to think it over. Both sides made the most of the

respite to dig themselves in, the troops to salt down their horses and the cattle that Cowie smuggled in to them at nights from his lair on one of the islands of the Bay, the Republicans to mount the three captured guns alongside of their two old four-pounders. At the end of the week, on 31 May, Smith put his men on half-rations and told Pretorius that he would stay to see him hanged as high as Haman. The Boer batteries opened fire.

It was a desultory siege. The Boer guns, well served by Germans, boomed on and off all day without much effect beyond shattering the laagered waggons and forcing the gunners to serve their pieces on their knees behind the inadequate breastworks. The British infantry, outranged by the Boer muskets, replied with volleys whenever a good target presented itself.

Both sides soon began to feel the strain. With great humanity, Pretorius allowed the British women and children to leave the camp and go on board the *Mazeppa*, which presently ran the gauntlet of the Boer marksmen at the harbour mouth and stood out to seek help for the beleaguered garrison. But that still left the troops, on quarter rations now, cluttered up with white and black camp followers and their own sick and wounded in the filthy shelter trenches. The republicans on their side were troubled. Keeping their heads down in a ditch was not the kind of warfare they were used to. At the end of a fortnight they were so short of ammunition that their gunners had to cut up the iron cables of *Mazeppa* and *Pilot* and mould or beat out leaden cannon balls as best they could, and the Raad sent messengers post-haste with 2000 half-crowns drawn from its jealously husbanded hoard of silver to buy powder at any price on the High Veld and, if they could, at Colesberg in the northern Colony.

Nor was the Maatschappij as a whole making a good showing. Early in June, Jan Mocke had ridden in with 300 Transorangians and a few Winburgers he had picked up on the way. That brought the strength up to some 600 burghers, but there ought to have been twice as many. No one had come from Potchefstroom; not a man had been sent officially by Winburg, while the men who had come from Weenen in Natal itself could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The Republic, which had been sinking under the necessary burdens of peace, was utterly unable to bear up against the strains of prolonged war. Maritzburg, full of people since the Zulu alarm of the New Year, had hailed the arrival of the British prisoners and the long waggon-train of spoil as enthusiastically as Londoners had once hailed Anson and the loot of the Acapulco galleon. The prisoners had been incarcerated in the now happily completed gaol, handcuffed two and two by day and set in the stocks at night, but well fed for all that. Everyone had been well fed at the capital at first, and the news that there were free rations to be had brought folk trooping in from all quarters. But as the edible portions of the booty disappeared and the war still ground on its way, the authorities stopped the free issue, cut down the prisoners' rations, and even dispensed with the prison guard.

In the third week of June both sides grew desperate. The British were down to a handful of biscuit dust a day eked out by horse biltong and such skinny crows as they could bag; the Boers had ceased their cannonade and settled down to the weary business of starving the defenders out. Pretorius sent one last frantic appeal to Potgieter for help, adorned with a highly coloured account of his Congella victory: half the

enemy wiped out, six guns taken, and the rest of it.¹ And then the end came suddenly.

On the afternoon of 24 June, the Port Elizabeth schooner *Conch* anchored outside the bar. She had often done so before, but this time she carried an unwonted cargo. The Port captain, on boarding her in due course, looked down the hatch and saw the grenadier company of the 27th grinning up at him. He was told by officers who stood about the deck in mufti that H.M. frigate *Southampton* of fifty guns was coming up fast with five companies of the 25th from Cape Town.

The tug-of-war was coming. The famished defenders guessed it that night when the *Conch* sent up a rocket, and replied with every noise-producing instrument they could lay their hands to. Next morning the Boers mounted one of their four-pounders on the Point and dragged the other high up the Bluff on the other side of the harbour entrance. As they were concluding their labours they saw H.M.S. *Southampton* looming through the gathering darkness. At midnight the frigate anchored beside the little *Conch*.

The morrow was a Sunday. Pretorius left a strong party to hold Smith and his men, and posted his remaining 350 burghers by the cannon on either side of the entrance. The *Conch*, packed with soldiers, came straight at the bar towing four boats loaded to the gunwale with redcoats and sailors. As she entered the jaws of the Bay, the Boers opened fire at point-blank range. But two of the boats dropped their tow-lines and made for the Bluff, while the frigate stood in as close as she dared and scattered the Boers on Bluff and Point with her overwhelming cannonade. As the troops and exultant

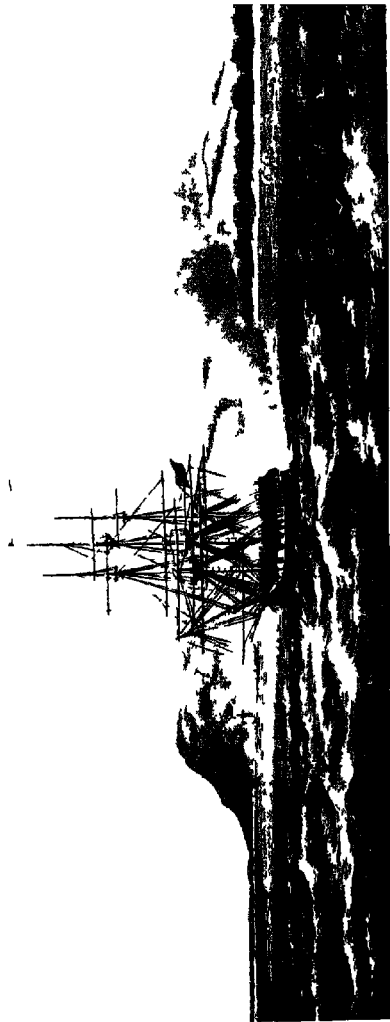
¹ A. W. Pretorius to A. H. Potgieter, June 1842 (MSS. in S.A. Public Library, Cape Town).

tars scrambled up the beaches, the Boers disappeared into the bush and poured tumultuously round both sides of the Bay and out through Congella and beyond.

Many of the Natalians went home, but Pretorius rallied some of them and took up a position a few miles back from the coast among the hills covering the road to the capital. The British, however, made no move. Smith indeed was anxious to be up and at the crowd of damned civilians who had first defied him, then shot him up, and then besieged him for weeks; but Colonel Josias Cloete, commander of the relieving force and his superior in rank, refused to take risks. Cloete was short of supplies, all the more as the *Mazeppa* had come in from her cruise in search of help with hungry mouths to feed, and he had hardly any draught animals. Besides, he hoped the Boers would surrender without more ado.

Colonel Cloete was a Cape man and on the whole a competent officer. He refused to confer with Pretorius till the Natalians had submitted, but, to make submission easier, he offered full pardon to all British deserters who would return to the colours and protection to all burghers who would take the oath of allegiance. But when at the end of some days only fifteen men had come in, and those nearly all non-Afrikanders, he took stronger measures. He called upon the local natives to bring in horses and cattle. It was the only means he had of getting transport, but in the inevitable scuffling three burghers were killed.

The certainty that Cloete would now advance on the capital, the death of these three burghers and the consequent revival of the old rumours that Panda meant to attack, the dissolution of the main commando, the virtual defection of the High Veld and Weenen districts, the departure of Mocke and the Transorangians, and



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H.M.S. SOUTHAMPTON COVERING THE LANDING OF THE BRITISH TROOPS AT PORT NATAL
26 JUNE 1842

from a lithograph by T W Bowler in the Jardine Collection, Parliamentary Library, Cape Town,
drawn from a sketch made on the spot

perhaps Cloete's assurance that the Netherlands treaty was not worth the paper it was written on, impelled Pretorius to fall back nearer to the capital and to ask for terms.

This time there was truth in the rumours about Panda's intentions, for on the day that Pretorius's flag of truce came to the British camp, messengers arrived from Zululand saying that their King was calling out his impis to march against Maritzburg. Cloete forbade Panda to do any such thing, and proposed liberal terms to the republicans including an amnesty to all save Pretorius, Joachim Prinsloo, ex-Voorsitter of the Raad, Jacobus Burger, Raad Secretary, and the brothers Michiel and Servaas van Breda. The fate of the first three as ringleaders, and of the brothers as chief agents in the looting of the *Pilot* and *Mazeppa*, must rest with the Governor.

There was wild excitement at Maritzburg when the terms were announced. But the game was up. The leaders failed to hold their remaining men. Neither they nor half the members of the Raad either would stay to support their government even when Pretorius and Boshof pleaded that a respite would give the King of the Netherlands time to intervene. They drifted away proclaiming loudly that they would have nothing to do with surrender, and left Pretorius, and brave Landman, reluctant to take up arms and slow to lay them down, and the prudent Boshof to invite Colonel Cloete to come up to Maritzburg.

Cloete came and on 15 July induced the twelve members who constituted the Volksraad, under the presidency of Boshof, to accept the terms proposed *sans phrase*. The Raad agreed to submit to the Queen, to release all prisoners, to restore the captured cannon

and such other public and private property as might still be in their hands, and to await a general settlement of the land problem. Pending that settlement, white and black alike must continue to enjoy the lands they had held respectively at the time of the arrival of the troops. Finally, Cloete removed the ban from Pretorius as a reward for his recent conciliatory conduct.¹

As soon as he could Cloete hurried back to Cape Town with the five companies of the 25th which, before Napier had risked sending them to Smith's relief, had been under orders to sail for Afghanistan. Smith, a major now, was left with some 325 men of all arms and eight guns of various calibres to hold Port Natal and to collect port dues and customs for the Crown. So, for nine harassing months to come, Smith as magistrate under the Punishment Act tried to rule the Port, and the Raad tried to maintain its shattered authority over Natal and the High Veld districts.

The Raad's writ soon ceased to run at the Port; the Major would not have it so. Indeed so fearful did he appear to be of recognising the independence of the Natalian government that he sometimes addressed officials by name and not by their titles. But if Smith was jealous of the Raad, the Raad was not unnaturally jealous of him. Three months passed before Smith could lay hands on a copy of Ohrig's pamphlet which Burger had called in after the rout, while a couple of officials who took the recent submission to the Queen so seriously that they asked him whether their tenure of office would be sanctioned, got into trouble at Maritzburg.

Nevertheless the Commissie Raad carried out the terms of the peace treaty as best it could. It set free the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 62 ff; J. C. Chase, *op. cit.*, ii, 236 ff.

British prisoners, though not before the 'bad man' of the capital had taken a shot at them through the prison bars and had been set in the stocks by the horrified Pretorius, Lindley and other bystanders.¹ Boshof doled out the £500 due to the owners of the *Mazeppa* a few pounds at a time from the almost exhausted treasury, and Pretorius sent back most of Smith's cattle. But neither Boshof nor Pretorius could send back much of the other spoils of May. The perishable goods had been consumed, 200 head of cattle had gone a-missing, and twice since the treaty the Government store had been broken into. All they could do was to send down the poor relics, a pile of empty crates, and a few service muskets, damaged and without ramrods. None of which things improved their relations with the Major.

Smith was in a thoroughly bad temper. He was buying Boer horses for his guns at stiff prices, and was collecting, through Ogle's people, the beasts that had been lifted by the coast Zulus in response to Cloete's unhappy call for draught animals. He refused to allow claimants to 'recognise' their cattle in frontier fashion and, as often as not, sent them away empty-handed till the balance of his own be returned.

The background of these bickerings was at first thoroughly black. In July Panda celebrated the defeat of his Boer suzerains by driving his American missionary into Natal and eating up one or two kraals whose people had listened too attentively to the good man. That had set everyone in Natal talking again of the coming Zulu invasion. On the other hand, in Natal itself, two unauthorised patrols had gone out to teach the natives that the burghers would stand no nonsense, and one of them, led by Gert Rudolph, a man of energy

¹ *Annals*, i, 730.

and the biggest speculator in burgher land rights south of the Drakensberg, had killed half a dozen. That at least restored confidence. The rumours of a Zulu invasion died away and, when the Raad met early in August, men were talking so freely of an expedition against the tribes to recoup themselves for their losses that Panda asked for British protection.¹

The Volksraad met at barely half its proper strength. To the end of the chapter it was to have hard work to get anything more. It strove energetically to restore order by decree. It bade its officials shoot to kill, if they must, and reminded burghers that they were bound to help them when called upon in the name of Land and Folk. But it doubled the burden and halved what little authority the unhappy landdrost of the capital had ever had by adding to his unwieldy jurisdiction the section of the Port district that lay outside Smith's domain. This desperate economy at least saved a landdrost's salary.

There was need for economy. The expenses of the late campaign had to be faced: endless claims for stores requisitioned and for waggon-hire, the German surgeon's little account for services and medicaments supplied to the forces, claims from wounded men for compensation, claims of the old familiar kind against the Zulu reparation account, claims even for losses at the hands of the half-forgotten Matabele, and no means in sight of meeting any of it.

At this crisis Landdrost Boshof and Commandant-General Pretorius both begged leave to resign. The Raad asked for the usual three months' notice and, in addition, refused to let Pretorius go until his report on the recent campaign had been passed. At once Pretorius began to recount all his old grievances, his erf

¹ *Annals*, ii, 68.

and the rest of it, but this time plaintively. He then went on strike, leaving the Raad secretary and messenger to make what they could of his official papers,¹ and the Raad to appoint the doughty Gert Rudolph provisional commandant of the enlarged Maritzburg district, that is, of central and southern Natal.

The prospective retirement of Boshof was a blow to the Volksraad party, a blow whose weight was redoubled in September when Sir George Napier offered a reward for the apprehension of Burger, as well as of the three others mentioned by Colonel Cloete. These three last at once retired to the troubled Weenen area beyond the upper Tugela well out of reach. But Burger, judging the length of Smith's arm more nicely, sold his town house to one Adolph Coqui, a Belgian Jew, and retired no farther than to his farm a few miles from the capital.

Pretorius and Burger were thus both lost to the Government. But Boshof was still at the helm. He made a last desperate attempt to issue the land titles before it was too late. The forms were ready but so far none had been issued. It would be well to have claims substantiated before a commission arrived from Cape Town to go into the whole matter, well also to know precisely what claims would be made on the unalienated lands by wounded men and sufferers at the hands of Dingaan.

It was going to be hard work. The books showed 1800 claims for Natal alone and most of the farms they represented had never been occupied even in the most liberal interpretation of that term. Conditions on the High Veld were of course chaotic. No matter. Boshof instructed the High Veld authorities to get on with the preliminary inspection as fast as possible, and, assisted

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 216, 223.

by J. Bodenstein, the new Raad secretary, himself issued Natal title-deeds with all speed. To make sure, Bodenstein dated the deeds as from April, before the arrival of Smith's column.

Early in October, Boshof made way as landdrost for the new commandant's brother, Bernhard Rudolph, a mild, not to say timid, man. And then the blow fell. On 24 October, when only some 500 titles had been issued, Smith forbade all such proceedings as a breach of the treaty. It was useless for folk who were eagerly awaiting their deeds to clamour that they would obey no law that did not emanate from their own Raad. There could be no more issue of titles and, therefore, no prospect of the revenue that should have begun at last to flow from the holders of them. It was small consolation to know that the first sale of erven at the new village of Winburg in Vet River district had realised over £400. Not a penny of that would be payable till titles were issued, and when would that be? Meanwhile the owner of the site was claiming £150 for his farm. With no customs duties from the Port and no prospect of land revenue, the Raad was reduced to asking Smith for a little temporary accommodation.

Smith had nothing to give the Raad, nor was he in a mood to give. The fewer dealings he had with the Boers, 'the most obtuse and wrongheaded people' he had ever met, the better he would be pleased.¹ He was intensely suspicious of Commandant Rudolph. He did not believe that he would be willing or able to keep his burghers from hunting in disturbed Zululand, but he knew that he and other Maritzburg notabilities had helped several of his men to desert. He had stopped that by sending the Natalian whom the soldiers openly

¹ *Annals*, ii, 132.

called the recruiting sergeant to Cape Town on a charge of felony, but that did not bring back the deserters and their arms and equipment from the High Veld.

Early in November Commandant Rudolph followed the deserters northward. He went because Potchefstroom had protested against its subordination to Maritzburg under the new conditions and was threatening to give away to others the farms whose owners had gone down into Natal. But he went also because things were moving between the Orange and the Vaal and he must see what it all amounted to if the British were to be got rid of even now.

What it amounted to was this. Transorangia, with Winburg as its uneasy ally, was destined for many months to keep the Cape Government in a state of irritated anxiety for the peace of its northern frontier, and to reduce the Natal Government, wedged in between the turbulent High Veld and the redcoats and the Zulus, to a condition that bordered on hysteria. The centre of the turmoil was Jan Mocke.¹

There were at this time perhaps 10,000 Europeans on the High Veld, pre-Trekkers, Trekkers, and all sorts, nearly three times the population of Natal itself. Apart from those who were more or less concentrated round Winburg and Potchefstroom there were a dozen parties that owed allegiance to no one except their own commandants or field-cornets. They were hard put to it in some ways; their woollen clothes were wearing to tatters and many must make shift with hides and skins. But leather clothing was no novelty to some of them, and all had freedom. That made up for everthing. They

¹ *Annals*, ii, 204. *Vide* also Chase, *op. cit.* Chase gives a good deal on Transorangia up to May 1843, where his book ends.

also had horses and gunpowder. The numbers of these folk were growing fast in Transorangia and just beyond within the shadowy bounds of Winburg, as men trekked across the Orange in search of liberty and pasture, or, in some cases, because the Colony was too hot to hold them. The principal group leaders in the south were still Michiel Oberholster of Riet River and Lukas van den Heever of Bushmans Spruit. These two were pre-Trek men, fearful and jealous of later and more vigorous arrivals. Farther north on the Modder river were Mocke himself, set upon presenting Transorangia to the Maatschappij, and Jacobus Snyman, his ally of the moment.

South of the Winburg border there was no government that even claimed widespread authority; the very boundaries that divided tribal lands from areas of European occupation were undefined. Boers lived in Philippolis on farms leased from Adam Kok's Griquas, while little clumps of them alternated with groups of Moshesh's Basutos and Moroko's Barolong and the rest in the Caledon corn-lands. All parties coveted those corn-lands and some of the Boers looked enviously at Basutoland beyond the Caledon which had been remarkably free from the horse-sickness that had ravaged southern Africa a year or so back. The Boers too were jealous of the Griquas. Why were these folk, emigrants from the Colony like themselves, treated by the Colonial Government as independent and they not? Were they, Afrikaners, perchance held to be subject to Adam Kok's jurisdiction, white men subject to a coloured captain? Unthinkable.

Nervous tension had been growing for some time before the recent crisis in Natal. Dr. John Philip, the complete Macchiavelli in Boer eyes, had been the rounds

of the tribal courts and mission stations in those parts towards the close of 1841, and some of the Boers had told the man whom they, and many an Englishman on the eastern frontier also, held responsible for the Kaffir war in 1834, that they would hold him responsible for any trouble that might arise in Transorangia.¹ Griquas accused Boers, and Boers accused Griquas of cattle-rieving, and the Paris Evangelical and Wesleyan missionaries sank their feuds in a common fear of what might come of it all. Then had come news that the British were at the Bay and Natal's appeal to Transorangia for help. At once Mocke had gathered his men and ridden away, while those that remained talked openly and eloquently of chasing Moroko off his lands.

A frightened deserter from the Boer camp at Port Natal had brought the first news of disaster. Recruiting had stopped forthwith and presently, in July, Mocke and his men had come home very quietly. They would tell little of what had really happened in Natal, but they made much of the Zulu raids on Boer cattle and the death of the three burghers to the anxious authorities at Winburg and to Transorangians who already feared that the Caledon tribes would fall upon them. The agitation abated somewhat when two field-cornets came up from the Colony with the assurance that the officials there would use their influence to keep the chiefs quiet so long as the Boers remained upon their farms. The talk then was all of peace, and Mocke went out of his way to soothe Moroko. The land was assuredly his, he told him. Why could not Boer and Barolong dwell in amity side by side?²

But though he spake thus fair and softly to Moroko,

¹ W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer and Briton*, p. 195, n. 3. ² *Annals*, ii, 60.

Mocke had by no means given up hope. He had brought some of the more determined Natalians back with him, furious at the Raad's submission to Cloete and his Queen, and both he and they were ready to persuade themselves and everyone else that the agreement was simply a six months' truce at the close of which the Hollanders would come and drive the redcoats out. They can hardly be blamed if they did believe it, for Pretorius and Boshof had commended submission as a means of gaining time for Dutch intervention, and Boshof had induced waverers to accept republican land titles by telling them that if fighting began again, and they must be careful to let the British take the first step, help would be forthcoming from other Powers.¹

During October 1842 rumours swept back and forth over the Drakensberg gathering volume as they went. H.M. brig *Lily* carried out target practice off Port Natal. The echo of her guns told Winburg that she was heavily engaged with a Dutch frigate, and far distant Transorangia that she had been sunk by two Dutch men-of-war.² Deep answered deep. Mocke intercepted letters from a local Wesleyan missionary and from Moroko, and sent alarmist and highly inaccurate versions of them to Winburg with a call for help. The local landdrost and heemraden in due course informed the horrified authorities at Maritzburg that Moroko and others had made 'a terrible onslaught' on fugitive Europeans.³ The next news that reached the capital was in a way more reassuring and somewhat more accurate. Mocke was going to attack Moroko and was expecting help from Colonial burghers.

Mocke was flying at big game. Two of his men had

¹ *Annals*, ii, 110.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 110, 138.

³ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 218; *Annals*, ii, 56, 96.

been haled to Colesberg charged with murder under the Punishment Act. He meant to have no more of that and the surest way to end it was to proclaim a republic in Transorangia. Regardless, then, of the proclamation which Sir George Napier had issued in September reminding the Trekkers everywhere that they were still British subjects and threatening them with penalties if they encroached upon native lands, he gathered his clans and, with a glance towards sympathetic Colonial burghers in Colesberg, Cradock and Graaff-Reinet, announced that he would proclaim his republic at Alleman's Drift on the Orange river on 24 October.

The whole of the High Veld was stirring. Potchefstroom-Winburg, forgetful of their recent neglect to help in the defence of the Port and the capital, expressed officially their disapproval of Natal's submission, and Potgieter, with many excuses for his past neglect, forbade the Volksraad to make treaties with any Power without consulting his republic. The landdrost of Winburg resigned and left his men to go their own way, while in Transorangia Mocke thrust aside the feeble opposition of Oberholster and set out for Alleman's Drift.

An equally notable company was approaching the Drift from the Colonial side. Judge Menzies was presently on circuit. He and the magistrate of Colesberg had before them a warning from Oberholster of what was coming, a suggestion from Moshesh and his French missionaries that H.M. Government should annex all within the limits of the Punishment Act, and Adam Kok in person to plead for help against Mocke. The Judge, a thickset, rubicund and dogged Scot, took charge of the situation. He talked with Mocke and others at the Drift and gathered that they had been

driven to action by Napier's proclamation, fear of native and missionary intrigue, and the restiveness of their own young men. He then proclaimed the Queen's sovereignty over all as far north as the twenty-fifth degree of south latitude and eastward to the twenty-second longitude east, always excepting the dominions of independent chiefs and of His Most Faithful Majesty of Portugal.¹

No sooner had the judge and his cavalcade ridden away than Mocke set up his beacon at the Drift and sat himself down to report to Maritzburg. He dilated on Menzies' fear at the sight of his commando, poured scorn on his proclamation, announced that he had told him that the Maatschappij was one from the Orange river to the residence of the farthest emigrant, and finally asserted that the local tribes were ready to give land for burgher settlement 'but not without the Commandant-General A. W. Pretorius shall have first come to reason with Moshesh about it'. So let Pretorius come in January unless the English war should have broken out again, in which event he must give Mocke warning so that he could be in time for it. Meanwhile there was to be a meeting on 10 November at which Oberholster would throw in his lot with the other commandants. And could Maritzburg let him have a little gunpowder? He was so short of it that he was thinking of sending all the way to Delagoa Bay for some.²

Pretorius, sulking in his tent, was not in a position to accede to Mocke's invitation, but, as we have seen, Commandant Gert Rudolph and a Raad member went northward early in November.³ They went to Weenen first, where burghers had freely signed a protest against

¹ J. C. Chase, *op. cit.*, ii, 258 ff. ² *Annals*, ii, 114. ³ *Vide* p. 287, *supra*.

the Cloete treaty drafted by a local German. That protest had now gone over the Drakensberg to collect further signatures, and thither they followed it, taking with them Anton Fick, a recent and bitterly anti-British arrival from the Colony, who was already a man of influence in Weenen.

The meeting of 10 November was all that Mocke had hoped. Holland, it was said, had laid their case before France and other Powers, and the British Government desired to have nothing to do with Natal. Hence, the Maritzburg Government was requested to include Transorangia in the Republic.¹

Mocke's request reached a mere Commissie Raad, which referred it to the full Raad that was due to meet in January 1843 after a general election. The Commissie was in fact incapable of dealing with affairs of any kind at the moment. The Natal Government seemed to be on the point of dissolution. Leadership there was none. Unhappy Landdrost Rudolph, after prolonged efforts to rid himself of his thankless office, fled away at this very moment down to the American mission station on the Illovo river, whence he bombarded Major Smith with alarming reports of the intentions of the High Velders, and prayers that he would not mention his name for fear of 'evil-disposed people'.²

Poor Rudolph was not the only panic-monger. Natal rang with alarmist reports: Oberholster was said to have been killed, though whether by Griquas or rival Boers was not so certain; two thousand burghers were coming up from the Colony, troops were moving on Colesberg and the British inhabitants of the Colony were forming volunteer corps for defence, and, again and again, the High Velders were coming to Natal to attack

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 228.

² *Annals*, ii, 149.

Ncapaai, or Panda, or the troops, or alternatively the 'well-disposed'.¹

Panda first and the troops next, thought Major Smith. He sent the Zulu king warning and himself stood by. The well-disposed, thought peaceable farmers, who began to slip away quietly over the Drakensberg before the crash should come, while Maritzburgers met secretly to discuss with bated breath what they must do if the High Veld should in fact roll down upon Natal. The Commissie Raad, for its part, raised the alarm that Panda was going to cross the Tugela in arms and ordered its acting commandant to put his two cannon into as good a state as their honeycombed bores would allow.²

There was this much solid truth in the flood of rumour: the troops were moving up to Colesberg. Napier had been much exercised at the recent wild doings in Transorangia and had just told his chief, Lord Stanley, that the proper course would be either to annex that troubled country or else to make treaties with the principal chiefs and promise them definite support. He had small hopes that even the treaties would be sanctioned, for he had had much ado to persuade Lord Stanley to consider the retention of Natal, in spite of his protest that the first shot fired settled that question. Under the circumstances Napier was bound to disavow Judge Menzies' sweeping annexations,³ but he then went as far as he could to prove to all concerned that his government had a bite as well as a bark. The north-eastern districts of the Cape Colony, from which so many of the Trekkers had gone, were full of men overhauling their muskets ready to go to

¹ *Annals*, ii, 129, 139.

² *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 229.

³ J. C. Chase, *op. cit.*, ii, 265.

the help of their brethren in Transorangia if the tribes should attack them, and of quieter folk who were asking why the authorities did nothing to restore order. Early in December, therefore, Napier ordered Lieutenant-Governor Hare and 800 men up from Grahamstown to make a demonstration on the southern bank of the Orange near Alleman's Drift.

Hare's parade was the first appearance of troops in force on the northern border. It had a quietening effect on both sides of that restless frontier. Potgieter himself visited Transorangia while Hare's men marched and countermarched, but he made no impression. He found Moroko and Moshesh highly diplomatic. Yes, they were his friends still and would gladly renew their old treaties of amity. But they were also friends of the English. There could be no question of closing the northern road to them. The Queen, said Moshesh, was only going to fetch her people back. 'The road is open', shrugged Moroko, 'for everyone who goes on his business.'¹ With that Potgieter must return to Potchefstroom and henceforward confine his energies more completely than ever to the Transvaal, while the Lieutenant-Governor posted detachments at Colesberg and Cradock and marched back to Grahamstown. Napier, for his part, received orders to hold on to Port Natal for the time being, and to expect the temporary loan of a battalion of infantry.

Excitement died away, a process hastened in Natal by the arrival off the Port not of the longed-for Dutch frigates, but of the *Winchester* and *Cleopatra* flying the White Ensign. The Maritzburg government was still

¹ *Basutoland Records* (ed. G. M. Theal), i, 51.

lamentably weak. A general election held in December, at the height of the recent crisis, had ended in a fiasco, seven members having been returned with a single vote apiece. Another held in January had been more convincing, but still two members had to be co-opted to make up the full number, and Pretorius declined to take his seat. The Raad made what arrangements it could for the local administration of Natal, and then devoted its main effort to retaining its hold upon the districts beyond the mountains. Potchefstroom it must have despaired of, but Winburg might yet be saved. It boldly sent a committee of enquiry to look into the administration of the law on both sides of the mountains and invited Winburg to send delegates to Maritzburg.

Two Winburgers arrived in the middle of January 1843 and, impressed by a perusal of the Republic's 'correspondence' with the King of the Netherlands, soon came to terms. Winburg was to disband its commandos and to set up a Provisional Government of twelve, with a Commissie Raad of five in permanent session to keep in constant touch with the capital.¹ So for the next month or two the mutual relations of Maritzburg and Winburg became normal; that is, the Winburg landdrost resumed his duties and sent on complaints and demands for land, and the Raad noted the complaints but refused to register farms until its committee of enquiry should have reported.

The Raad's attempts to raise revenue were not so successful. There could be no customs revenue, for all vessels bound for Natal must first touch at one of the Cape Colony ports and pay duty there. The Raad therefore proposed to levy additional duty at Maritz-

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 233.

burg on goods coming up from Port Natal. Major Smith objected promptly on the ground that all duties belonged to the Crown and laid an embargo on up-country goods till the Raad gave way.

The Raad met again in April in desperate need of money. It appointed Bodenstein secretary for two years to come, confirmed Rudolph in his office as Commandant and allowed his landdrost brother to retire into the comparative peace of private life. But when it appointed J. P. Zietsman landdrost it warned him that there could be no question of a salary for six months at least, decreed that three months' grace should be given in the execution of any judgement for more than £7 : 10s., and prudently rescinded a resolution of more hopeful days whereunder Raad members were held personally responsible for public debts that might arise from their legislation.¹

Having shelved the financial problem, the Raad turned to the now periodical complaints of the misdeeds of *rondswervende Kaffers*. It observed helplessly that there was already a law that covered the subject, but that, if it would be a help in the present time of trouble, coloured servants must find new masters within eight days of leaving the old instead of within the customary fifteen.² More than that it could not do. Its very landdrost could not enforce his judgements. One prominent citizen, close to the capital, who had been sentenced for taking cattle from a Hottentot, was threatening to shoot anyone who tried to serve a warrant on him. No one would volunteer to run that risk and what could the landdrost do with a police force that consisted of one aged and decrepit '*justitie Kaffer*'?

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

The Raad adjourned proposing to meet again three months hence in July. But early in May the news spread fast through Natal and over the Drakensberg passes that the *Brazilia* was back at the Port, with Captain Reus and Smellekamp and a pastor and schoolmaster from the Old Country and who knew what else. 'The good God has answered our prayers', wrote Commandant Rudolph to the Winburg landdrost. '... Those that are disposed for the English are cowed . . . the time has now arrived for every one to know himself, and come as speedily as possible to carry the business into effect.' True, only the *Brazilia* had come thus far, but 'our Dutch friend' was expecting 'the other large ships', when all would be well.¹

The tocsin sounded useless in distant Potchefstroom, for Potgieter and his men were away in the north seeking the Christians who were said to be held by the Matabele. But it called forth armed men from between the Orange and the Vaal. Jan Mocke induced the landdrost of Weenen to summon a mass meeting. Five commandants and many field-cornets attended with their fighting tails, among them Jan Kock, late of Hanover district and presently Mocke's right-hand man, a man of better education than most of the High Velders and for that very reason strong to sway them. The cry was for action, and, since Oberholster had stayed away, he was informed that his community had been and hereby was abolished. So with threats to send as prisoners to Winburg, or to drive back over the Orange, or at the very least to fine all who would not go with them, the captains departed with their men to build stone-walled laagers for the protection of their families and belongings. They would muster again in the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 169.

middle of June at Modder River and march thence on Maritzburg and Port Natal. For 'the Dutchman' was at the Port but could not come ashore because Smith would not let him.¹

Major Smith had indeed refused to allow either cargo or passengers to be landed from the *Brazilia*. Smellekamp had spent some time under arrest in Cape Town on his way home from Natal in 1842. His vessel had now avoided the Colonial ports and was thus not authorised to put in at Port Natal. Nor were her clearing papers from Holland in order.

Smith had gone further. He refused to allow Smellekamp to speak with the Natalians. Had he permitted him, he would in all probability have given a more peaceable turn to the events of the ensuing seven stormy months. For Smellekamp would have had to confess that Pastor Ham was only a licentiate and must look to the Volksraad to regularise his position as a clergyman in the same way as Erasmus Smit had looked to Retief with such disheartening results. Above all he must have told them that the King of the Netherlands and his ministers had declined to have anything to do with Natal. As it was, Smith was taking no risks in what was to him an 'Alsatia' full of defaulters from the Cape Colony, and so overrun with Germans that it bade fair to become a German colony. So the *Brazilia* and her company went on to Delagoa Bay, leaving the party of resistance convinced and the party of submission half persuaded that Smith had refused to let them interview Smellekamp because he really had had something of moment to tell them of the intentions of the distant Dutch Government.

Smith could hardly have chosen a more unlucky

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 175.

moment for this display of official rigidity, for no sooner was the *Brazilia* below the eastern horizon than H.M. corvette *Cleopatra* entered Port Natal. She had on board the Hon. Henry Cloete, brother of Colonel Cloete, member of the Cape Legislative Council, and Her Majesty's Commissioner for Natal.

Lord Stanley and his colleagues had cogitated long but they had at last decided on a South African policy. The policy for Transorangia was to be mediation by the Cape Government in land disputes between Europeans and others; protection of the tribes from violence; treaties of the Waterboer-D'Urban type with leading chiefs, if necessary, and an increased garrison to enable Napier to guard his long northern frontier. The 45th was coming as a permanent addition to the garrison, and also the 7th Dragoons to help the infantry and the Cape Mounted Rifles to patrol the stony banks of the Orange as well as the downs and valleys of the Eastern Frontier. Natal, on the other hand, was to be annexed. Apart from all other considerations, the troops were there and had been fired on, coal was there, and the Foreign Office believed that Smellekamp was a mere tool in the hands of hostile France.¹

As a member of an old Cape Peninsula family, Henry Cloete might be expected to understand the Natalians somewhat better than did Smith, and as a lawyer he could be trusted to uphold the civil against the military power. On landing he crossed swords with the gallant major. He insisted, and here he had the Governor's backing, that the Volksraad still had authority under the Queen over all Natal including its Port, and obliged Smith to permit the republicans to levy additional duties on goods going up-country from the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 171; C. J. Uys, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

Port area. Meanwhile he sent two proclamations to Maritzburg with a request for an immediate interview with the Government.

Maritzburg was already in a ferment at the news of Cloete's coming. The contents of Napier's proclamations redoubled the hubbub.¹ The first was welcome as far as it went, for it withdrew the price set on the heads of Burger, Prinsloo and the two van Bredas, and left the question of full pardon to be determined later. But the second was a cumulative series of shocks. Natal was to be annexed. Whether that meant Natal proper or the Republic on both sides of the mountains the proclamation gave no hint, but annexation in any shape or form sorted ill with the beliefs of those many who held that there had been nothing more than an armistice with the first Cloete, and those many more who had never faced the fact that constituted authority had then indeed submitted to the Queen. It was small comfort to them that existing institutions were to continue for the time being, that local revenues would be applied locally, that the cost of the troops would be born by 'the mother country', and that the Commissioner would consult their wishes as far as possible as to the form of the future government. How did that help when he knew and they knew that the only form of government they wanted was independence?

The sting of this second proclamation was in its tail. Natalians were asked to accept certain principles. None of them cavilled at the prohibition against unauthorised attacks on tribes beyond the frontiers or of 'slavery in any shape or under any modification'. But what was to be said of the two final clauses? First, 'there shall not in the eye of the law be any distinction of persons

¹ *Annals*, ii, 164 ff.

or disqualification founded on mere distinction of colour, origin, language or creed; but that the protection of the law, in letter and in substance, shall be extended impartially to all alike'. Secondly, 'farmers and all others' were indeed to be secured in their holdings till their claims could be passed upon; but, pending that decision, there were to be no further grants nor sales of land, and all must make accurate return to the Commissioner of the land which they, or those from whom they might derive their claims, should have *'bona fide'* occupied for a period of twelve months next before the arrival of the said Commissioner'. Only those who could prove such occupation would be confirmed in their holdings.

No colour bar, and who could say what barriers to the acquisition of land? What had they trekked for but to get good land and plenty of it on their own terms and to 'maintain proper relations between master and servant'? Besides, the twelve vital months dated from June 1842 when 'Smith's war' had been raging, and that had been preceded by six troubled months beginning with the New Year when Pretorius had spread the report that Panda was coming. The war and the lure of free rations had drawn men away from their farms to the capital; the collapse, the native raids on cattle, and the death of three burghers had been the prelude to further months of anxiety when men had dreaded what might come upon them from the other side of the Tugela or down the Drakensberg passes. All that had made for concentration at the capital or in little laagers of waggons and earthworks on this farm or that, and not for the occupation of the countryside. How could they prove *bona fide* occupation of even one farm, let alone of two? And what was to become of

'rights' bought up by leading men from needy burghers? How would the ten farms and 'rights' claimed by ex-Commandant-General Pretorius fare, or the forty, comprising about 250,000 acres, claimed by Commandant Rudolph?¹ And what would they say on the High Veld, or do?

It was no time for talk but rather for action. The republican flag was hoisted over the houses of the Commandant and of the local cooper, a recent comer from Cape Town way. Townsmen turned out, farmers flocked in, and patriots, men and women, adjured their fellows to stand fast. Let the people at the Port bow down to Smith and Cloete if they would; they were 'traitors and Englishmen'. But good Natalians must fight or trek back to the plains. Women, led by Susanna Smit, drew up a memorial that detailed the woes they had suffered at the hands of all mankind outside the ranks of the Maatschappij, and lamented that having come so far to find liberty and peace, they had found nothing but colonels and commissioners and proclamations; while 130 men eagerly signed a declaration that they would never become British subjects, nor have anything to do with Henry Cloete until their leaders had been permitted to speak with Smellekamp. That done, the Commissie Raad, at the demand of the mass-meeting, postponed the next session of the full Volksraad till the first week of August.²

Having thus denied Cloete access for nearly two months to the only power that could accept or reject his proposals or attempt to control the burghers, the Commissie and the Public went their several ways, Commandant Rudolph hastened off once more to Weenen and the High Veld, and Boshof and Landdrost Zietsman

¹ *Annals*, ii, 191.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 208.

made ready to greet the Queen's Commissioner. They met him ceremoniously a mile outside the capital, travelling quietly without an armed escort. That evening the leaders called upon him at his lodging next the principal shop in the centre of the straggling little township. All of them, Prinsloo, ex-landdrost Rudolph, Carel Landman, Boshof, Pretorius himself, with a glance at the excited crowd outside, admitted that there might be trouble since authority was dead. Dead a long time, said Zietsman, whom Cloete marked thus early as his chief hope in the coming struggle.

Next morning (9 June) Cloete explained his proclamations and his mission to a crowd of 500 excited men and women packed into the little court-house. He said his say under a running fire of interruptions directed as a rule by Mrs. Smit, who fairly took the bit between her teeth and resolutely suppressed her mild Erasmus when he tried to check her. Then Anton Fick, Weenen's new spokesman, rose to read the men's and women's protests. Cloete, affronted, tried to go out. He could not. Aisles, windows and door were blocked by clamorous humanity; he must perforce listen. But when Fick began to move that there should be no intercourse with him till their leaders had seen the Dutch envoy, he rose and by sheer force of anger dominated the meeting. He told them the truth about Smellekamp and his doings, and with that strode out.¹ This time the audience made way for him, but it did not disperse till the Raad members present had promised that another meeting of the Public should be held when the full Raad opened in August.

A day or two afterwards Cloete called upon the Maritzburgers to register their erven. The copy posted in the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 178 ff.

shop next his lodging was defaced and had to be renewed under guard, while the Commissie Raad obliged Zietsman to take down the copy he had displayed at the magistracy because of the excitement it occasioned.

Cloete won little support from the local leaders. Indeed Pretorius and a deputation of notabilities asked for at least two farms for each claimant, and when Cloete refused to do more than recommend for favourable consideration farms that had been genuinely purchased or abandoned only during the recent troubles after *bona fide* occupation, he and they went away and joined in the general talk of a trek back to the High Veld. The result was what might have been expected. At the end of the first week only ten claims for erven had been registered; at the end of another three barely a quarter of the total of 450 had been accounted for, and those for the most part in the names of British, Germans, M. Coqui and other non-Afrikaners. And several of the folk who thus registered had asked for protection from the violence which one man's property had already suffered on the mere suspicion of neutrality.¹

Rumours presaging strife began to sweep down from behind the mountains on agitated Maritzburg. Predikant Lindley reported that he had turned back from his pastoral visit to the Transvaal because a great commando was mustering at Winburg. When Cloete enquired about that, Mr. Secretary Bodenstein shuffled uneasily and Commandant Rudolph, recently back from those parts, knew nothing about it, but suggested that, if it were so, the Winburgers might be coming to help their brethren against the Zulus who were pouring across the Tugela.²

There could be no doubt about the Zulu incursion.

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 187.

² *Ibid.* ii, 199 ff.

Panda, like any native potentate in similar circumstances, was determined to be on the winning side. He had frankly transferred his allegiance from the Republic to the British. In spite of his desire to recover from the Swazis the royal cattle which had occupied his thoughts, and the Volksraad's, just before the British invasion, he had refrained at Smith's command. But latterly he had been growing more difficult. He had first refused point blank to have the American missionaries back in his country and then, in June, had slain one of his brothers for alleged conspiracy. That brother's aunt, Mawa, had fled with a great following and swarms of cattle and had settled down upon the coastal plain from the Tugela to within forty miles of Port Natal.

Such was the situation early in July when Cloete returned to the Port. In the light of his experiences in Maritzburg and of Mawa's invasion, he and the Major both wrote to the Governor asking for more troops, above all for mounted men. While they waited for the reinforcements Cloete busied himself with registering erven at the Port and farms in the coast-belt. There was no difficulty here. Claims came in thick and fast, often two or three for the same piece of land. But few of the claimants were Boers. Once upon a time this district of Port Natal had promised to become the most populous of all the districts below the mountains. At the New Year of 1842 it had boasted of a hundred Afrikander families, not less than 500 souls. But farmers began to find that sheep did better on the higher levels inland, that only cattle born in the country or slowly acclimatised to it could thrive on the luxuriant grass, and that the summer heat tried their families. Redundant natives, too, increased in numbers

uncomfortably, and then had come eighteen months of wars and rumours of war with British and Zulus and High Velders. Family after family had slipped away northward till now there were only some two score families left beside the nine British families. And some of these were preparing to follow their friends to the capital or to Weenen or even to the High Veld.

This trek from the coast belt was stimulated by the presence of the Commissioner and the soldiers. Those burghers who remained showed their hostility as openly as they dared. They boycotted the meat contractor to the garrison and made it hard for Smith to find horses for his guns, or drivers and leaders for his waggon teams. Further than that they could not go, for in the middle of July H.M.S. *Thunderbolt* steamed into the Bay, landed two companies of the 45th and a couple of field guns, and then raced off again in the direction of Cape Town.

On the other hand, at the turn of the month, men from Transorangia and Winburg and even Potchefstroom trooped into Maritzburg, Mocke first with Jacobus Snyman and Jan Kock, then a score of commandants and field-cornets each with his party. Soon there were 600 of them in addition to 200 Natalians camped with their horses and waggons in the wide market square, and threatening openly to burn the place to the ground rather than see it fall into the hands of the British. After all, it was not their town.

The High Velders had come down, full of enthusiasm and reckoning confidently on Dutch aid, to help their brethren who, they had been told, were at war with the British and the Zulus. They found peace reigning at the capital, no signs of the Hollanders, and a very mixed reception awaiting them. Burger and Servaas van

Breda, lately proscribed, and Commandant Rudolph and the cooper and Fick were cordial enough; but many solid citizens seemed to fear them more than they feared the troops. The voluble Coqui fled with his family down to the Port lamenting, and even Predikant Lindley despatched his wife and children thither.

Worse still, they found that Boshof and Landdrost Zietsman, Pretorius and Maritz, old enemies reconciled at last, and Prinsloo and Michiel van Breda for all that they had once been under the ban, treated the submission of 1842 as a reality and were inclined towards coming to terms with the Commissioner.

Worst of all there were horrid doubts abroad that Smellekamp was a broken reed. Boshof had just received a belated letter from him, written months back in Holland, in which he admitted that though the treaty with Natal was to be discussed by the cabinet at the Hague, he was 'dubious of the result', while Zietsman had also received a letter from a friend at Utrecht which stated roundly that the Netherlands Government had repudiated all idea of interference.¹ At first the High Velders refused to believe the dreadful news. Boshof and Zietsman were both suspect; Zietsman's letter at least must be a forgery. It was only after they had carefully examined watermark and postmark that they were convinced that 'the other large ships' would never come sailing in past the Point in the wake of the little *Brazilia*.

The High Velders gave way to the extent of agreeing that Cloete must be interviewed, and they joined with Pretorius in sending him a safe-conduct and a request that he would come up to Maritzburg unaccompanied by soldiers. Then they tried to get control of the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 266.

governmental machinery. The full Raad had not yet assembled. Mocke and his friends succeeded in convincing the Commissie which presided uneasily over the tumult that it must make way for a Combined Raad representative of the Maatschappij on both sides of the mountains, and accept the list of members which they themselves had drawn up.¹

The Combined Raad met with the invaders in a strong majority, and at once Anton Fick launched a fierce attack on Boshof, the arch-*intekenaar*, signatory to the Cloete treaty. The wrangle lasted all day inconclusively. Next morning, however, Pretorius marched in with all his clan fully armed, and without more ado accused the leaders of the opposing faction of having spent the night plotting to create a disturbance in which he and Boshof and others were to suffer grievous bodily harm. Whether it were so or not, and this was not the last time that Pretorius was to play that card, the challenge was not taken up. The Combined Raad dispersed amid confusion and the Pretorians made ready to face the Commissioner.²

Cloete arrived that same afternoon, 5 August. A commando of eighty men met him three miles out of town, escorted him with all respect to his lodging, and offered him a guard. This Cloete declined. He had come as they had requested without soldiers. He would do without armed men of any kind.

The republicans were not to know that Cloete had come thus not because he had so wished but because he must. He had long ago arranged that as soon as reinforcements arrived, Major Smith was to move up to Maritzburg before Raad and Public assembled to

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 256 ff.

² H. Cloete, *The History of the Great Boer Trek*, pp. 179 ff.

support the 'well-disposed'. That was why H.M.S. *Thunderbolt* had hurried in with reinforcements. These gave the Major 550 men in all, but none of the mounted men he had asked for. Without them, Smith declined to move. He had learned his lesson at Congella and, to Cloete's fury, would not push forward infantry and artillery unsupported through sixty miles of hilly country with Mawa's restive Zulus on his flank and the high probability of resistance at the end of the march. The frigate had gone coursing back to Cape Town with a renewed appeal for cavalry; but Cloete, realising that the crisis would be upon him before even a steamship could make the round trip, set out for the capital armed only with the knowledge that Boshof and his friends at least knew that Dutch help was not to be expected.

Cloete came to Maritzburg convinced that his only hope was to make a settlement with Natal proper and let the High Veld go for the time being. Better so perhaps, for that would leave the Natal die-hards free to trek away thither and 'enjoy their notions of liberty in the deserts of Central Africa'.¹ It was an opinion the Governor shared. Two days after his arrival the Raad met.

Stephanus Maritz presided over a House of sixteen members. The public swarmed inside and outside the council chamber. Mocke at once demanded the creation of a new Raad and, though at the end of a morning's hot debate, he had failed to unseat the sitting members, he had gained the right to fill out their number to thirty-six. Calculations during the lunch interval convinced him that even this would not give him an assured majority, so to the surprise of everybody he declined

¹ *Annals*, ii, 191.

to make any nominations and rejoined his followers outside. The Raad, thus reprieved, filled up the new seats itself with a mere half-dozen to represent the Ultramontanes and carried on amid the clamour of the crowd, which alternately begged them to stand fast for independence and denounced them as traitors.

The essential business was finished on that first day. Zietsman set the pace. There was no use blinking the fact that, if the treaty of July 1842 meant anything, Natal was already subject to the Queen's authority. He gained good support from non-members like Pretorius, and Prinsloo who lamented publicly that he had ever been led to resist lawful authority, and from the Commissioner himself, tactful but watchful in his lodging next the *Raadsaal*. But it was Maritz who decided the issue. He astutely questioned whether the High Velders, who had had no part in the submission, ought to have any share in the present deliberations, all the more as it was not certain whether the Commissioner included their districts within his purview. A hurried deputation came back with an assurance that, as far as he himself was concerned, Cloete drew the line at the Drakensberg, definitely. The High Veld members withdrew and the rest of the Raad, with one dissident, resolved to stand by the treaty.

Next day, 8 August, the Raad met under the same public and clamorous conditions to debate the Governor's proclamation. Deputations trooped in and out of Cloete's quarters: first, an official group to ask that he would be content to annex only the coast-belt from which the Afrikaners were trekking fast. Next, when Cloete had replied that the question of how little or how much must rest with H.M. Government, the standing committee of the ladies of the capital waited on him

headed by Mrs. Smit. Cloete's stately report to His Excellency that he held his own and even lectured 'the females' in approved Victorian style did not bring out the full flavour of the story. The vehement Susanna Smit was a match for any advocate of the Supreme Court, and when at the end of two solid hours of impassioned rhetoric she led her followers out, she left the exhausted Commissioner reflecting that much that was otherwise unaccountable in their husbands' conduct could now be explained.¹

One last deputation, from the Raad once more, to beg that some shadow of a colour bar, some little inequality as between white and black before the law be retained. Cloete, as in duty bound, refused but sought to soften the blow by distributing copies of a despatch in which Lord Stanley set forth the political and economic advantages that would follow acceptance. Unable to sway the Commissioner, Maritz and each member of the Raad in turn harangued the Public, trying to induce it to face the fact that the Governor's terms must be accepted. It was useless, 'the inflexible feelings' of the majority would not be swayed; so, as evening closed in, the Raad took its courage in both hands and, again with one dissentient, accepted 'for itself and the peaceably inclined folk'.²

That same night Mocke, who had hitherto avoided Cloete, came in with his lieutenants to bid him farewell. Most of them were impressed by Stanley's proposals, which they now saw for the first time. But not Jan Mocke. He maintained a dour silence until, just at the end, he burst out (and here he was echoed by his comrades) that he was finished with Natal.³ After all the

¹ *Annals*, ii, 259. ² *Ibid.*, ii, 259, 264; *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 243 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, ii, 261.

talk, all the prayers and promises, that it should come to this. So he withdrew and, next morning, rode away with his own men and a few of the more stiff-necked Natalians towards the passes of the Drakensberg, reviling those who remained behind in unmeasured terms.

Soon all was quiet in the town except for ruffians who wrecked the gardens of the leaders of the peace party and looted the State powder magazine. The weary Cloete sat down to pen a devout *Jubilate Deo* to his chief.¹

It was hard to realise that it was all over. Down at the Port, where, at the height of the crisis, folk from Congella had come rushing into camp crying out that the burghers were coming, Smith could hardly believe his ears.² But it was the end for all that, the end in fact though not in form of republican Natal.

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 265.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 273.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND TREK

... The rickety cart moved on
Like a tired insect, creaking through the dust—
There was another day behind them now
And any number of such days ahead
Unrolling like a long block-printed cloth. . . .
And now and then a flash of cavalry. . . .

S. V. BENÉT: JOHN BROWN'S BODY

THE Volksraad's acceptance of the Imperial Government's terms for itself and 'the well-disposed' meant, at the moment, that the two districts of Maritzburg and Port Natal were not prepared to offer further resistance to the British arms. For some months it was an open question whether Weenen, the northern district of Natal, would stand with those districts or with its northern neighbours of Winburg and Potchefstroom. In the end Weenen threw in its lot with the capital and the Port, while the two High Veld districts, which had never paid much heed to the Raad's authority and had not even been invited to accept the terms, formally severed their connection with a republican territory that was being transformed into a British colony.

That formal severance of relations did not give the High Velders peace among themselves nor immunity from British intervention nor relief from trekking. The Second Trek began, the spasmodic retreat before the

spasmodic British advance of Transorangians to Winburg, of Winburgers to Potchefstroom, and of Potchefstroomers to Andries-Ohrigstad first and then to the inaccessible Zoutpansberg. Meanwhile, as the soldiers and officials and all that they stood for came in by way of Port Natal, and Zulus trooped across the Tugela westward, the Natalians also trekked away, some few to found the little republic of Buffels Rivier (Utrecht) in Zululand, but the great majority to join their fellows at Ohrigstad or Potchefstroom.

(The transformation of Natal was slow. The surrender had taken place in August 1843, but the Raad continued to meet regularly till October 1845 and the first Lieutenant-Governor did not arrive till December. For more than two years Natal led a queer half-and-half existence as a crowned republic whose Boer government was at once upheld and held in check by British bayonets.)

There was no mistake about the British bayonets in the anomalous Natal polity. Major Smith never got his mounted men; there were none to be spared from the Cape Colony. No matter now. At the end of August he marched into Maritzburg with 200 of the 27th and two six-pounders and camped on the high ground that dominates the town from the west.

Talk of trekking had died away at the capital, and even the most fiery were coming in to make their peace with Cloete, headed by Commandant Rudolph, 'a person easily led away by others' the kindly Commissioner noted in this golden dawn of good-fellowship.¹ They came in, too, to register their claims to erven so

¹ *Annals*, ii, 265.

fast that within a few weeks Cloete had all the facts he needed, though not without a last minute's wrestle with a leading citizen who was held back by a determined wife and pushed on by the united strength of six sons who saw their own erven in jeopardy.

Meanwhile Maritz, Boshof, Zietsman and one or two others, assisted by Cloete's comments, had drawn up a constitution which they hoped would be acceptable to the Imperial authorities. It was modelled as far as possible on the republican institutions, but since it must find room for a representative of the Crown, it provided for a much sharper division of powers and an effective civil executive.¹

There was to be a Governor with a veto on legislation and power to revise sentences, an Executive Council, and a Legislative Council of twelve members elected for *two years instead of one*. This legislature was to be the final local law-making body. There were to be no more Commissie Raads to confront the full Raad with *faits accomplis*, still less tumultuary assemblings of the Public to overawe honourable members with prayers and threats and the thumping of musket-butts. Nor was there to be a vote for every white man. The franchise was to be no longer a right but a privilege conferred on holders of land to the value of £150 who had been resident in Natal for six months and could read and write either Dutch or English. Such a franchise would honour the new equality before the law of men of all colours and would yet bar non-Europeans effectually for a long time to come. And if it barred the poorer and more ignorant Europeans also, why, so much the better. To make assurance doubly sure the committee prohibited the immigration of paupers.

¹ G. M. Theal, *History of South Africa*, II, 390.

Some such scheme might have been taken as a basis of discussion long ago, before the Ncapai affair, when Lord John Russell and Napier had talked of a President and Council to be chosen from among the Natalians. There was no hope for anything of the sort after all that had happened since. For what the committee's proposals amounted to was that the Governor should be a glorified landdrost marooned among heemraad councillors, who would take their orders from the electorate, impose them on His Excellency by weight of numbers and damned iteration, and look to the Imperial garrison, paid by the British taxpayer, to carry them out.

During the sessions of September and December, the first to be held since the crisis, the Raad showed that this was indeed its very human hope. The four standard topics of debate came up: ways and means, land, law and order, and segregation. The issue could hardly be raised under the first two heads, but under the last two the Raad indicated plainly what was expected of the troops.

The Raad was as hard put to it as ever for money even when, in October, it regained control of its customs revenue. That gain was offset by the increase of its civil list from £320 to £428 and was likely to be more than offset if the Governor granted the Kerkraad's petition that their predikant's salary, which was a year in arrears, should be made a charge upon the public funds.

In these straits, the Raad fell back on fines and licences. There were to be fines for owners of stray animals, and for anyone who being neither doctor nor qualified apothecary should sell the medicines that were in such request in a Boer community, while as for

licences, the presence of regular troops suggested an obvious shift. Up went the cost of a monthly liquor licence sixfold and then tenfold, and, lest the supply of liquor fail, the Raad permitted a jovial German and his partner to open a brewery and distillery. But it refused to increase the number of licensed houses at the capital. Two, it conceived, were ample for a town of 120 families and a garrison of 200 men.

On the score of land the Raad found Cloete well inclined to consider generous treatment of those many who could not prove continuous occupation of their farms during the crucial twelve months, but it gained little comfort from Major Smith on the score of the maintenance of local law and order, and little from him or from the Commissioner on that of native policy.

Smith refused to allow the troops to do ordinary police work in the capital. Hence the Raad resolved that there should be four more '*justitie Kaffers*', which would make five in all, as soon as the landdrost could find suitable recruits. Nor would the Major sanction commandos to recover missing cattle until Ncapaa's beasts and the balance of the oxen carried off from his own camp in 1842 should be restored. He even told applicants that they must point out the actual thieves and not simply expect to recover the equivalent of their losses from someone somewhere. Neither he nor Cloete seemed ready to take at its face value the total of 1300 cattle and 500 sheep and goats on Commandant Rudolph's list of missing for the year past. They appeared rather to think that it might have been much worse during a year of confusion for which, they frankly said, the Natalians had themselves and their High Veld allies to thank.

On the other hand no one could deny that whereas

there had been some 20,000 natives in all Natal before Mawa's mass invasion of June 1843, now there must be close on 80,000.¹ It might be that down in the coast-belt, where they were most numerous, the natives were quiet, selling their produce readily to Europeans, who as readily bought. It might be also that two of the American missionaries had collected a quarter of them at their stations in those parts. But that still left the rest scattered about among the farms under no European control.

Urged on by Pretorius, the Raad, in September, brought forward its oft-deferred policy of wholesale transfer. Five native families were to remain on each farm, but the rest must be thrust behind the Tugela and Buffalo rivers in the north and, in the south, no longer behind the Umkomanzi nor even the Umzimkulu, but behind the Umzimvubu itself. 'Extermination' would be a much bigger undertaking than it once would have been, but surely the troops and burghers could do it together.²

At this bold mention of the Umzimvubu, which watered the lands of Ncapai and of Faku the Pondo, *amicus* of the Queen, Smith smiled sourly and Cloete, temporising, declared that he must first stabilise Natal's relations with Panda and then see the lie of the land elsewhere for himself. So, soon after the session, Cloete set out for Zululand accompanied by Toohey and Commandant Rudolph. Both had volunteered their services, the one, as Smith unkindly suggested, to represent the Port Natal ivory interests, the other to save, if he could, the farms staked out beyond the Tugela.³

¹ *Annals*, ii, 310; *Report of Native Commission of 1852-53 (Natal)*, i, 99, 25, 27.

² *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 246; *Annals*, ii, 282.

³ *Ibid*, ii, 317.

However that may have been, on 5 October, after some days of negotiation, Cloete persuaded Panda to set his mark to two treaties. The one recognised the Buffalo and Tugela rivers as the mutual boundary of Natal and Zululand, the other ceded St. Lucia Bay to Her Majesty.¹ Cloete believed the bay had become the goal of High Veld ambitions now that Port Natal was gone, and feared that it might become a sphere for the activities of the ubiquitous Smellekamp. After inspecting its most disappointing harbour he rode back to face the problems of Natal once more.

Chiefest of those problems was the attitude of the Weenen men. Cloete must make sure of Weenen. Though the village was still only a huddle of sixteen huts, the district was going ahead fast. It already numbered a thousand souls, perhaps one-third of the remaining white population of Natal, and the flow up to it from the coast and even from the capital was still proceeding. Almost to a man and woman the folk were determined to have nothing to do with England and her commissioners and many were still haunted by hopes of Netherland aid.

Weenen was bound to be affected more directly than other parts of Natal by doings on the High Veld, its hinterland. At the close of 1843 it and the whole of the High Veld were seething with hopes and fears and suspicions set in motion by opposing forces: Her Majesty's Government bearing upon Transorangia and Smellekamp operating from Delagoa Bay.

After the return of Jan Mocke and his friends, dishevelled and depressed by their failure in Natal, Transorangia had quieted down as far as a masterless territory with a mixed population well could do. Boers had re-

¹ *Annals*, ii, 299, 303.

stored most of the cattle they had taken from the Griquas during the late troubles, and though none of them had so far admitted openly that they were British subjects *in partibus infidelium*, there was a prospect that some of them would soon do so. Oberholster, who, during the terrors of the previous June, had thrown himself on the mercy of the Colesberg magistrate and had been thrown back by him on his own resources, had rallied his men and repudiated Mocke's hegemony.

This rally of the 'well-disposed' in Transorangia as well as in Natal encouraged Sir George Napier to go as far as his limited means and a reluctant Secretary of State would let him to secure the peace of his northern border. On 29 November and 13 December 1843, he signed 'Waterboer' treaties with Adam Kok of Philippolis and Moshesh, King of the Basuto, far and away the most powerful rulers in those parts.¹ In return for the usual subsidy, each chief promised to keep the peace in his own territory, to warn the Colonial authorities if trouble were brewing, and to send criminal British subjects back to the Colony for trial under the Punishment Act.

News of the signing of these treaties and more or less accurate versions of their contents spread fast. Two points stuck in Boer throats: land and status. Adam's Orange river boundary was alone named, but it was his other boundaries that really mattered to Philippolis farmers, who already outnumbered his Griquas. The Basuto line was indeed named all the way round, but not only did it give Moshesh a good deal that he had never claimed and withhold much that he did, but it included parties of Boers who were interspersed among

¹ *Papers re Kaffirs*, No. 424, xxxviii (1851), pp. 214 ff.; *Basutoland Records* (ed. G. M. Theal), i, 55.

his people just as their brothers were with the Zulus to the west of the Buffalo-Tugela line in Natal. Worse, much worse than any danger to land claims, was the fact that the treaties indicated unmistakably that white men in the territories of Moshesh and young Adam Kok were to be subject to their jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of a black man and a coloured person. Let either of them try to exercise it!

In the midst of the excitement, Oberholster tried to get through to Natal with a petition signed by 258 Transorangians asking the Queen's Commissioner to include their territory in his settlement. An armed party of Winburgers stopped him at the drift across the Sand river and seized the petition. But they did not find the duplicate hidden in the bedding, and this Oberholster delivered to the delighted Cloete, who urged Napier to accede to a request which fulfilled his prophecy that the 'well-disposed' everywhere would soon seek the Queen's protection.

Meanwhile another letter of a more encouraging kind was going the rounds of the High Veld and Weenen. Smellekamp had written to say that he was at Delagoa Bay, where he would be delighted to trade, and whence Pastor Ham would go to whatever cure of souls he might be summoned. But he also broke the news that Ham was only a licentiate and that no help could be looked for from the Dutch Government.¹

Here was a double blow to men who either did not know or would not believe the report to that effect which had reached Maritzburg just before the recent crisis. However, Delagoa Bay would be a better outlet to the Indian Ocean than none at all, and even a licentiate of their own way of thinking was better than no minister.

¹ *Annals*, ii, 308 ff.

Daniel Lindley had done his best. He had served the congregations at Port Natal, Maritzburg and Weenen regularly, and had twice gone to the Winburgers and Potchefstroomers. But he could not do everything. Help was needed urgently if only to prevent any more couples being married by unauthorised persons with disastrous effects on the legitimacy of their offspring, and to save the rising generation from growing up 'more expert in the use of the gun than the knowledge of the alphabet'.¹

There was more in it than that. High Veld and Weenen die-hards looked on Lindley with suspicion. After all he was an American, a member of his Society still, and not in the full sense a member of the Reformed Church. He had turned back from his projected visit to the Transvaal on the eve of the crisis of 1843 because of the uncertain attitude of the commando that had been massing at Winburg, and, though he himself had stayed on at Maritzburg when the High Velders had ridden in, he had sent his family down to the Port and had shewn clearly that he was not anxious to be identified too closely with the doings of some of his scattered flock. Besides, now that the capital, Lindley's headquarters, was lost to the Maatschappij, Weenen and the districts further north must count their predikant lost too.

Yet the northerners refused the services of another predikant which were offered them at this time. In the middle of September, the Rev. Abraham Faure, minister of the Groote Kerk at Cape Town, and a high official in the Synod of the Church, landed at Port Natal.² He was the first Colonial predikant to visit the Trekkers, for the Church had disapproved of the Great

¹ *Ibid.*, ii, 361.

² *Ibid.*, i, 355 ff.

Trek officially, and, like the Colonial Government, had had too few men for the work in the Colony and none to spare for work outside. Like the Government again, it had long cherished hopes that the Trekkers would one day return. However, here was a predikant at last.

Faure stayed for some time at Port Natal and then went on to Maritzburg to be welcomed by Lindley and Sarel Cilliers and other members of the Kerkraad. They recommended that he should go to Weenen, where the need was great and whence he could get into touch with the High Veld folk. But even at the capital Faure gave umbrage to Christian souls by praying in Colonial fashion for the young Queen, and presently there came a letter from Weenen, backed by a verbal message from Winburg, that he was not wanted. A predikant who had only come with the Governor's approval and in the track of the troops and the Cloetes was no predikant for them. So, in December, Faure returned to Cape Town disappointed.

Faure had come to Natal at an unfortunate moment for his cause. Weenen and Potchefstroom-Winburg were making up their minds to break loose from the south and to get through to Smellekamp and Ham at all costs. Mass meetings at Potchefstroom and Winburg talked of resistance to the Imperial Government and of the trek to the north out of reach of the Punishment Act which had been at the back of Potgieter's mind ever since he and Cilliers had ridden through the eastern Transvaal highlands in search of Trigardt in 1836.¹ Early in December, therefore, a party set out

¹ On Potgieter's activities in the Transvaal, *vide Voortrektermense*, ii, 22; iii, 7, 30, 54; L. Cachet, *Die Worstelstrijd der Transvalers*, pp. 292 ff.; J. Stuart, *De Hollandse Afrikanen . . .*, pp. 181 ff.; S. P. Engelbrecht, *op. cit.*, i, 43; *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke*, pp. 181 ff.

for Sofala, while Potgieter himself started with a large following of Winburg and Potchefstroom men to make contact at Delagoa Bay with Holland and Portugal together.

There was similar fiery talk at Weenen during that first week of December. The landdrost, and Joachim Prinsloo and Michiel van Breda, once proscribed, but now in the Government's good books and anxious to merit the distinction, tried to quiet the populace. Talk of driving the troops out of Maritzburg was indeed dropped, but nothing would satisfy the people but that a *kommissie* should actually see and hear Smellekamp. So Commandant Gert Rudolph, Prinsloo and two others set off down the fever-stricken valleys that led to Delagoa Bay.¹

Failure or disaster attended all three parties. The Sofala expedition degenerated into an elephant hunt. Potgieter was held up by rains and swollen rivers; like Trigardt before him he saw many of his oxen destroyed by tsetse fly, 'a species of bee or wasp', and he made his way home with difficulty. The Weenen party, on the other hand, got through to Delagoa Bay and saw Ham and Smellekamp with their own eyes. They found that the schoolmaster was dead; they were told that Holland could and would do nothing for them and that the British Government had declared its sovereignty up the twenty-fifth degree of south latitude, and they were invited to open up trade with Messrs. Klyn & Co. at Sofala or somewhere else to the north of that line. 'Twenty-four hours' stay was enough for the disillusioned men. They swung round abruptly and rode homewards. And as they rode their horses died one by one, and one by one they themselves went down with fever. One of

¹ *Annals*, ii, 364.

the four died at the first frontier homestead; poor Prinsloo staggered home to die; and stout Rudolph and his remaining companion reached Weenen sick men. That finished it. At the New Year of 1844, Weenen was ready to face Henry Cloete and the inevitable.

All that January, Cloete rode round registering the widely scattered farms of the Weenen district, lovely sheep and cattle country, the best in all Natal, and reputed to be full of coal. And if he must jog along rough tracks under rain and thunder such as he had never known in the gentler parts around Cape Town, rain and thunder at the death of one chief and the installation of another was, in native eyes at least, a good omen. For that is what Cloete's ride through Weenen meant. South of the Drakensberg the Republic was dead. Long live the Queen!

The Republic of Natal might be so dead that even Jacobus Burger made his peace with the Commissioner, but the Raad still sat enthroned at Maritzburg. It held a one-day session early in March 1844 and tried to assert its authority. It asserted it on the most dangerous and delicate ground of all, native policy.¹

The Raad had before it circumstantial reports of an imminent attack by Panda, of wholesale horse-stealing by the Weenen Bushmen, of murder, robbery and increasing pressure by Zulus in the coast-belt, pressure which Stephanus Maritz, its own *voorsitter*, had tried to ease by sending his cattle in to trample native gardens. It therefore recalled to the public mind the segregation programme of the preceding September and, as a step thereto, authorised field-cornets to drive off all Kaffirs who had squatted on farms without leave of the owners since New Year's Day, and to burn their

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 252.

huts. Having thus chalked up defiance on the door of authority, the Raad, like Johnny Russell on a later and more famous occasion, departed.

Cloete was furious. He insisted that a Commissie Raad should meet at once and reopen the question. Not that he was unsympathetic to the Natalians nor blind to the fact that the fundamental problem for Natal was the search for a *modus vivendi* between the scattering of European pastoralists and the tribesmen who outnumbered them so vastly. Segregation there must be after a judicial enquiry and in half a dozen fair-sized reserves at a prudent distance from the European villages, but not segregation *en masse* at the discretion of field-cornets who, as on the old eastern frontier of the Colony, would be liable to call out the hue-and-cry on the demand of their neighbours. Passes again there must be, but merely one general identification pass and not the multiplicity of documents with which the Raad had sought to festoon the unlettered Bantu.

In this matter of a single pass Cloete was a century in advance of frontier opinion, British and Afrikaner. Meanwhile he discounted heavily the alarmist reports that had given rise to this sweeping legislation. During his tour of the Weenen district all the farmers had borne witness to the good behaviour of the little Zulu clans on the European side of the Buffalo river, and in the course of the hurried visit to the Umzimvubu country in the south-west from which he had just returned, he had found no Europeans at all, just land claims and nothing more. He had gone into the tales of native violence which had so alarmed the Raad and had proved them all false, except the most recent on which he was still awaiting a report. What was certainly true was that one burgher, who had originally been given up for dead, had

himself been charged with culpable homicide and had been acquitted by landdrost and heemraden, and that an over-zealous field-cornet implicated in the same attack upon natives had also been acquitted by the heemraden against the landdrost's wishes.

In face of such arguments the Commissie agreed reluctantly that field-cornets should receive complaints and, after due enquiry, pass them on to the landdrost, who would give the necessary orders under the watchful eye of Major Smith.¹

Cloete's scheme for coping with cattle-rieving and so on was a warning that the coming dispensation in Natal was to be something very different from the modified Trekker polity that had been developing there during the past five years. It was to be even yet more foreign to the conceptions of governance and society that held sway on the High Veld. Non-pastoralist influences and bitter experience had taught the Natalians something of the needs of a mixed community; the compromise constitution which they had recently sent on to Cape Town proved that. Experience unaccompanied by outside influences had taught the High Velders much less. Their ideas were Trekker, pure and unalloyed. One month after Cloete's brush with the Natal Raad they announced them unequivocally at Potchefstroom.

Before evacuating Maritzburg in August 1843, the Transorangians had washed their hands of Natal. Now, on 9 April 1844, the men of Potchefstroom-Winburg followed their example in the most public and formal manner. Jan Kock took the lead at Winburg, and at Potchefstroom a *Burgerraad*, a Burgher Senate which included Hendrik Potgieter himself, repudiated the Cloete

¹ *Annals*, ii, 367 ff.

treaty of 1842 in which it had had no voice, declined to negotiate with the British authorities, and declared the independence of the two great districts on either side of the Vaal.

The Potchefstroom assembly further promulgated a body of laws, the Thirty-three Articles.¹ Those laws were true Trekker legislation in spirit and in form, a confused list of civil and criminal laws, the work of earnest and unlettered men. Here was no committee with a civil servant Boshof in the chair to arrange the clauses in logical sequence, still less with a Commissioner Cloete in the background to purse his lips at some proposals and to offer acceptable advice on others. Here rather was a folk-moot called out of the dim ancestral Teutonic past, a body of leaders drawing on their experience, providing one at a time for their immediate needs and hopes and fears, and following the argument whithersoever it might lead them under a running fire of comment from the crowd of burghers that surged around them. First things were dealt with first, and if presently something that had been overlooked was remembered, it was set down at the end of the clause under discussion, and so on to the next point.

The Thirty-three Articles were 'general regulations and laws for the Law Sessions', that is, for the Volksraad sitting as a Court in keeping with the main principle of the Thaba Nchu constitution of 1836, the first law-making at which Potgieter had tried his hand, that there should be a board of judges who should also make laws.

First, sessions were to be open to the public. From that followed four clauses for the maintenance of order in court, including imprisonment for twenty-four hours

¹ *Voortrekkermense*, iii, 172; G. W. Eybers, *op. cit.*, pp. 349 ff.

or more, long enough to get the business through, for anyone who defied the court messenger either singly or in company with his friends, and fine or imprisonment for anyone who insulted a judge, though that, to be sure, would oblige the insulted judge to recuse himself. Then rules for challenging judges by plaintiff or defendant, if, for instance, either of them had exchanged insults or threats with a judge during the action or the six months preceding. And, by the way as it were, 'No half-caste down to the tenth degree shall be entitled to sit in our meetings as a member or judge', that is, as legislator or interpreter of the law.

Next, three clauses on commando law widely separated, then four more and two after-thoughts on treason and conspiracy. These last were the anathemas of the Nine Articles of 1837 brought up to date: severe punishment for anyone who should or should have in time past colloqued with foreign powers or potentates, for those who knowing of treason failed to report it, for those who conspired against person or property or against the exercise of 'social rights' by a fellow-burgher, and for those who being neither commandant, sub-commandant nor field-cornet, should open other folks' correspondence.

Then, crimes. Perjury and violence, fraud by doctors who should give false certificates that enabled men to shirk public duty, and fraud by officials who should alter documents, subscribe false names, add to or insert anything in their books after they had been made up, were all to be punished by fines with or without imprisonment; but murder, parricide, infanticide and, curious emphasis, poisoning, all merited death.

Six clauses were held to be sufficient for the general run of crimes. But this was legislation by folk who

shared Retief's resentment of 'unjustifiable odium', and had been brought up among the *verklarings* that had distressed the Batavian officials. Slander or defamation by 'insulting private persons in the presence of witnesses' demanded two clauses, the first where the aggrieved was a man, the second with a tenfold minimum fine where the aggrieved was a woman.

The remaining half-dozen clauses dealt with a heterogeneous group of points: penalties for building too close to another man's property, penalties for going to native kraals to acquire apprentices illegally and, conversely, penalties for natives who should squat near town lands without leave of the full Raad; provision for the annual election of the Volksraad and the proper sealing of the voting lists; provision also for recourse to the Roman-Dutch law where local laws should prove insufficient, 'but only in a modified form and in accordance with South African custom and for the prosperity and welfare of the community'. Finally, an echo of Retief's Grahamstown manifesto of seven years back, 'every master shall have the right to maintain discipline properly among his servants', but if a master ill-treat them, they shall be taken away and he be punished 'in keeping with the nature of the case'.

It only remained to make known the area over which these just laws and just dooms should hold. The line was fairly clear on the south and south-east: the Vet river, a hazy stretch where Winburg overlapped the lands of the Caledon Valley chiefs, and then the Drakensberg mountains. But on all other sides the line was still vague. In his treaty with Pretorius in October 1840 Potgieter had marked out for immediate settlement the western half of the present Transvaal and Bechuanaland as far as the Kalahari desert, but he had also

claimed lands as far north as the Zoutpansberg. Boundary making in those directions could wait, but in Transorangia to the south the time had come for a decision. Potgieter therefore informed all whom it might concern that the authority of his 'Social Burgher Government' ran to the banks of the Orange river. Natal might be gone, but there was to be one High Veld republic from the frontier of the old Colony to the farthest point of Trekker penetration.¹

Potgieter presently set out to enlarge the borders of his expansive republic in the east and to find a road down the steep Drakensberg and across the sultry flats to Delagoa Bay. This time he marched in the dry season and with good fortune. He found Smellekamp on the point of returning to Holland, and Ham, whose wife had died, already gone to Cape Town, there to be ordained and to end his days long after as minister at French Hoek in the south-western Colony. But his visit was not fruitless. He arranged with the Portuguese that he and his people might settle in their hinterland provided they did not come too close to Delagoa Bay and that they made their own arrangements with the local tribes.

This Potgieter did. He secured from a chief of the Bapedi the verbal cession of a huge tract of land that lay between his stronghold in the Lulu mountains and the Swazi country to the south, far to the east of the open plains which he had hitherto been content to claim as conqueror of the Matabele.²

In August Potgieter was back at Potchefstroom without having lost a man or a beast. At once some of

¹ Potgieter's republic had its own flag: a red St. Andrew's Cross on a blue field, the flag of the ancient House of Burgundy; *vide* S. P. Engelbrecht, *Thomas François Burgers*, p. 145.

² *Vide* p. 158, *supra*; E. A. Walker, *History of South Africa*, p. 256, n. 2.

his folk set their faces towards the new lands which from all accounts should be as good as Potchefstroom or even Natal for tobacco and fruit and better than either for wheat. Potgieter himself trekked thither early in 1845 and chose his farm near the new village of Andries-Ohrigstad set in a lovely hollow of the hills a fortnight's ride from Delagoa Bay and close to the edge of the high Drakensberg passes down whose terrific slopes Trigardt had taken his waggons once upon a time. Not that he and his people abandoned their claims to lands and dominance in Potchefstroom. On the contrary they left a landdrost there to uphold both, and claimed the allegiance of Winburg also. Ohrigstad was to be the capital as Maritzburg once had been, and Potgieter was to be Head Commandant, chief executive officer, in the High Veld republic that was thus rapidly taking shape.

Such was the land and such the laws that Potgieter could offer to suitable recruits. Both land and laws appealed strongly to Trekkers without the pale and especially to those in Natal.

It was a blow to the prospects of peace in Natal that Henry Cloete sailed for Cape Town at the end of May 1844. His going robbed the Raad of a not unsympathetic supporter and freed its opponents from a restraining influence. The Raad had waited patiently for Cape Town's comments on its proposed new constitution and for the commission that should settle the burning question of the land. Months passed and nothing had happened except in matters of detail. The Raad itself brought the boards of heemraden up to strength and, a sign of the changing times, appointed a translator in Dutch and English at the landdrost's court at the capital.

In March also it licensed a newspaper under the Cape press law, *De Natalier en Pietermaritzburg Getrouwe Aantekenaar*,¹ the joint venture of an Afrikander and a Frenchman. A few minor civil servants arrived from Cape Town, and a little later Her Majesty's Government confirmed the free pardon to the late Joachim Prinsloo and the elder van Breda, and authorised the payment of Predikant Lindley's salary out of the public chest.

But the trouble was that that chest was practically empty. Customs revenue was still disappointing; there could be no land revenue till the land settlement had been made, and the thirst of the garrison had failed so lamentably to do what had been expected of it that the charge for a liquor licence had had to be reduced by seventy-five per cent. The Orphan Chamber accounts in terms of cattle were in inextricable confusion and the landdrost of Weenen reported that his predecessor's papers were without form and his cash-box void.

Since the news of the final settlement was so long in coming men began to ask whether after all the redcoats might not presently sail away as Jervis's Highlanders had done in 1839. From June onwards excitement began to wax higher and higher. Unsettling rumours drifted down from the High Veld by way of restive Weenen. Potchefstroom, Winburg and Transorangia were all agog at the prospect of fine lands and completer liberty in Potgieter's new country on the road to Delagoa Bay, and all were full of fury that Adam Kok should have dared to arrest a white man in terms of his recent treaty with the Cape Governor. In Transorangia itself the Potgieter men were quarrelling with Oberholster's pro-Colony folk, and Jan Mocke was said to be off again

¹ *The Natalian and Pietermaritzburg Trusty Register.*

to one of the Portuguese harbours. At once talk of trekking revived in Natal, and someone started a rumour that Ncapai was about to invade the fast-emptying coast-lands.

As that report died away Pretorius emerged from obscurity and raised the old cry that the People was being submerged by the rising tide of colour. It was the accustomed signal that he was about to make a bid for leadership.¹

Pretorius had chosen his time well. Cloete was gone and Gert Rudolph, shattered by the strains of his journey to Delagoa Bay, was anxious to resign the commandantship. Pretorius's signal met with a good response. Weenen men petitioned that he should be Commandant once more, and resolutions were passed that the outgoing Raad's dealings with Cloete be ignored and that all natives who had come into Natal since Smith's column had occupied the Port in May 1842 should be ejected.

A fierce general election returned Pretorius and a strong majority in favour of these drastic policies. Forthwith, in the first weeks of September, a triangular battle was fought at the capital: the new Raad against the old Raad with Major Smith and his glittering bayonets in the background. It was the last bid of the Natal republicans for something like independence.

There were casualties before battle was joined. Twelve of the outgoing Raad assembled to hand over, but only sixteen of the twenty-four new members came up. As in duty bound the *voorsitter* of the old Raad called upon them to swear to abide by the treaty of July 1842 and the terms of Napier's proclamation of May 1843. Pretorius and one other alone of the new

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 260 ff.; *Annals*, ii, 418 ff.

members took the oath. The remaining fourteen refused. What were the Cloetes to them, or Napier either? They had had no dealings with any of them.

All day long the argument proceeded, the old Raad refusing to make way, the new members stubbornly refusing to take the oath, and Smith from his Olympus of Fort Napier repeating that take it they must, if they wanted to sit, and warning them that he would not suffer them to disturb the peace by constituting themselves an opposition Raad. There could not be two kings in Brentford even if both were *rois fainéants*.

Next day most of the new members gave up and rode off homewards, and more than one of the old members prudently absented himself. But Pretorius took his seat, three ex-members were co-opted to make up the quorum, and the old Raad carried on. Perhaps to convince the electorate that it was still in the republican tradition, it very properly resolved that the cross streets of Maritzburg should be named after Retief, Uys, Pretorius and other Trekker worthies. It then, with much less propriety, stole the new Raad's clothes. It resolved that all natives who had come into Natal during the past two years should be given fourteen days' notice to quit, and asked Major Smith 'in the most friendly manner' to assist in the execution of a policy of segregation that was not barred by the treaty of 1842.

But there the Raad drew the line, It would not have Pretorius as Commandant. It accepted Rudolph's resignation on the score of ill-health; it adopted Pretorius's report on his campaign against Smith and the first Cloete; it set aside Rudolph's angry demand for a select committee to convince Pretorius that his conduct then did not deserve all the praise that was apparently claimed for it now. But the furthest it would go to fulfilling

Pretorius's hopes was to appoint one of his clan, the local blacksmith, provisional Commandant and to order him to clear redundant Kaffirs off the lands of his notable kinsman as an experiment. It then dispersed with a sense of duty done and reputation rehabilitated.

Major Smith promptly exploded in his best parade-ground manner. The Raad's proposals might not be a breach of the treaty of 1842, but they were a very definite breach of the final settlement of 1843, of which the Raad made no mention, but which it had none the less accepted and for whose sake it had defied the new Raad and the electorate. Things like this simply could not be done.

Poor Mr. Secretary Bodenstein took to his bed, but the other members of the Commissie Raad stood to their guns, at all events in public. They told the Major that the new law must stand, but privately their messenger assured him that though the necessary instructions must be given to the field-cornets at once, execution would be postponed till the end of the year, if possible.

Smith replied that that would not do. He ordered the Commissie peremptorily to stand fast. Unwilling to defy the military power outright and spurred on by a stinging article in *De Natalier* full of French revolutionary analogies, sneers at the local brand of democracy, and dark hints at what ought to be done to elected persons who were so deeply infected with 'the germ of despotism' that they had defied the sovereign people, the unhappy Commissie Raad hurriedly summoned the full Volksraad.

Ill luck dogged them. Just before the date fixed for the session, a party of burghers took the law into their own hands, crossed the Tugela and tried to drive out

a kraal of Zulus. In the ensuing scuffle one of their number killed a Zulu but was himself mortally wounded.

The news spread like wildfire and the Raad assembled in a blaze of popular indignation. However, after much debate, cooler counsels prevailed, and Pretorius and one or two others waited on Smith to assure him that they had never meant to go to extremes. They asked Smith to help them check the influx of natives. Smith agreed readily. The obnoxious law must be repealed, but field-cornets might order natives who had squatted on farms without leave during the past six months to move on and, if they refused, report them to him through the landdrost. He would then see what he could do.

So it was done. The constitutional crisis ended. From time to time thereafter Smith ejected small groups of unwanted new arrivals, and Pretorius subsided into a morose silence which he maintained till the end of the chapter, except once, when he emerged to demand of the astonished Raad repayment of the personal advances he had made to needy and desirous burghers at the auction of Dingaan's treasures during the triumphant Cattle Commando away back in February 1840.¹

Hard on the heels of this failure to carry through something of their segregation policy before the coming of the threatened Land Commission, the Natalians began to get details, incomplete but authentic, of the system of government and the land settlement that were in store for them. It was all worse than the most pessimistic had imagined.

More than a year ago the Raad had asked for an elective legislature of twelve members. Cloete had recommended one of eight elected and four nominated

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, p. 270.

members. The Executive Council at Cape Town had suggested a purely nominated legislature of six on the Cape model. After prolonged consideration the Colonial Secretary decreed that there should be no local legislature at all in a community too small to bear the expense and too mixed to hold out any hope that all interests, Dutch, British and Bantu, would be safeguarded. There might one day be local municipal bodies in Natal on the lines of those that were in course of creation in Canada and New South Wales, but for the present Natalians must face the fact that they were to have no share in the governance of their country.¹ A distant legislative authority at Cape Town and a purely official local executive—there was not even to be room for landdrosts and heemraden on the bench. On Cloete's advice, the supreme court was to consist of a single professional judge.

The land settlement bade fair to be even less acceptable. Though erf-holders in the towns were to fare comparatively well, the liberal provision for town lands was to be cut down and the rules for farms were to be enforced strictly. It was farms that really mattered and it was claims to farms that were often most difficult to substantiate. Apparently first-class claimants who had occupied their places throughout the test twelve months were to have no more than half-farms of 3000 acres, weaker claimants must expect less and in some cases nothing at all, and claimants strong or weak might be called upon to buy their farms for anything up to £50 apiece instead of holding them on the usual low annual *recognitie* payment.² If a man must buy land, what was the use of having trekked at all?

Further, the great wedge of land in the south-west that had once been earmarked for redundant natives

¹ *Annals*, ii, 379 ff.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 404.

and then for European settlement was lost to Natal. A new Governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, had taken Napier's place some months back, and had made a treaty with Faku the Pondo in October. It was a treaty similar to those which his predecessor had made with Adam Kok and Moshesh in Transorangia, and it included in the Pondo treaty-state all the lands from the Umzimkulu to the Umzimvubu river.¹

This ill news set men trekking by ones and twos. For three years past, since the New Year before the British had come, they had been drawing away northward out of lower Natal into Weenen; but now they were leaving Natal altogether for Winburg or Potchefstroom or Ohrigstad, countries where there was plentiful land, a colour bar, enough natives by all accounts to be useful and not so many as to be embarrassing, and no British nor likely to be.

From the close of 1844 onward, Boer Natal bled slowly to death and its republican government faded into nothingness. In Weenen the Raad's writ had already ceased to run. Ex-landdrost Andries Spies was uncrowned king of that wild country, and burghers recovered missing cattle in their own way. Down in the south the Port district was become almost entirely British and Bantu. Only the central area round Maritzburg remained and even there republican authority was dwindling. Early in 1845 the Raad begged the Governor to end the long suspense and so preserve to Natal something of a population capable of supporting a government. As it was, its chest was so empty that it could not keep up its prison properly, and the lack of reality in its work and the work of its courts was making it increasingly difficult to scrape up a quorum for either. To meet this

¹ *Papers re Kaffirs*, No. 424, xxxviii (1851), p. 235.

difficulty at least, it optimistically doubled and more than doubled the daily allowances of its own members, and at its next session, in April, voted substantial payments to heemraden also.¹

But quorums were ceasing to matter. The session of April 1845 was the last effective session of the Maritzburg legislature. The Surveyor-General, first of the new executive councillors and visible sign that the Raad's days were numbered, had already arrived. The Raad greeted him with a resolution that no law should be of force or effect in Natal without its sanction, but no one paid much heed to that feeble defiance. Folk were much more keenly interested in the Surveyor's handling of the land question. His instructions promised somewhat better things on that score than they had at first been given to understand. Claimants who had acquired erven but had failed to occupy them properly might retain them on payment of a fine. Fully substantiated claims to farms were to carry with them 6000 acres and not the threatened 3000, all farms could be held on quit-rent instead of being purchased outright, and claimants who had registered farms but had never occupied them were to be repaid the cost of inspection. But those who had speculated in claims were ruled out completely; farms which had only been occupied partially and, worse still, all future grants were to be limited to a mere 2000 acres; quit-rents were to be variable and comparatively high. The slow seeping away of men out of Natal went on.²

Among those who went at this time was that stout

¹ *Voort. Wetgewing*, pp. 270, 273.

² *Annals*, ii, 450. There were 1800 claims noted. Rather more than 500 titles had been issued. Cloete accepted 198 first-class claims, 173 second-class and 120 registrations. There were 66 speculative claims.

champion of Volksraad rights and enemy of all things British, Jacobus Burger. He had recently been given a free pardon, but that did not hold him. He and four of his Weenen neighbours trekked to Andries-Ohrigstad. Arrived there and finding that Potgieter's word was the law of the land, Burger organised a Raad on the Maritzburg model and resumed his ineluctable struggle against the Head Commandant. The legislative power might have been overwhelmed by an alien executive in Natal, but it had taken on a new lease of life in the eastern Transvaal.¹

The old order in Natal was going fast. The Raad met in July to watch Secretary Bodenstein hand over his duties to a provisional Crown Prosecutor, and to despatch the business, almost entirely judicial, that still remained for it to do. A few weeks later Major Smith and the 27th departed amid the usual shower of complimentary addresses, and a lieutenant-colonel took charge of Fort Napier with a detachment of the 45th. At last, in September, the long-expected proclamations came from the Castle annexing Natal formally as a detached district of the Cape Colony, the Colony from which the Trekkers had hoped to escape for ever.²

There was no more to be said, at all events in Natal. All the old actors were gone or going: Napier and Burger, Bodenstein and the Major, and the stormy Ncapai killed in battle as was fitting. It was time for the Raad to be gone too. It met for the last time on 6 October 1845, five members out of the twenty-four. Lacking a quorum and knowing that there was no hope

¹ S. P. Engelbrecht, *op. cit.*, *Bijlage*, ii; L. Cachet, *op. cit.*, p. 300; E. A. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 256 n.

² *Annals*, ii, 465 ff.

of getting one, the five adjourned their meeting '*tot eene nadere oproeping*'.¹ *Resurgam!*

The members of the new Executive Council arrived from Cape Town one by one, including the Recorder of the Court, none other than the Natalians' old acquaintance, Henry Cloete. Last, early in December, came the Lieutenant-Governor, Martin West.

Martin West was welcomed at the Port, in cordial but slightly involved terms, by the Rev. James Archbell, the 'Trekksers' friend of the early days and now local Wesleyan minister, and by fifty-six other inhabitants who seized the opportunity of his landing in 'this unrivalled country . . . to give expression to the lively ebullition of [their] British pride'.² . . . Port Natal had become Durban.

Presently West received a decorous welcome at the capital. He received none from Weenen. But the Weenen men were not silent. They were suffering, they said, from 'numerous depredations . . . by the native tribes, especially the Bushmen'. West wrote to the Governor for more troops. Mounted men he must have to give the security to Weenen that might tempt back 'many farmers who have lately withdrawn for safety beyond the Drakensberg'.³

The Natal management might be new, but clearly the play was to be the same.

¹ *Voort. Weigewing*, p. 279.

² *Annals*, ii, 480.

³ *Ibid.*, ii, 483.

CHAPTER XI

JOURNEY'S END

O bring mij terug na die Ou Transvaal . . .

BOER WAR SONG.

THE general situation in the lands of the Maatschappij at the close of 1845 was that the Republic of Natal was finished and its burghers were going 'by one and one' across the mountains, across the Vaal. Potchefstroom was marking time while its more determined or restless citizens moved away north-eastward to Ohrigstad. In Winburg an elderly landdrost and a harassed group of heemraden maintained some show of authority and eyed with apprehension the growing chaos and, presently, the steady advance of British authority in Transorangia.¹

Jan Mocke and Jan Kock, both of Modder River, were still determined to carry Transorangia into one united Maatschappij with Winburg and anything else there might be farther north, and all under the presidency of Hendrik Potgieter, the republican hope since the eclipse of Andries Pretorius.

Over against these two stood Michiel Oberholster and Lukas van den Heever, leaders of the pre-Trek Boers. They were resolved not to be incorporated in the Maatschappij under such auspices and, in spite of

¹ Vide *Basutoland Records* (ed. G. M. Theal), i; E. A. Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 231 ff. and notes.

the fact that nothing so far had come of their request at the end of 1843 that Cloete should include them in his Natal settlement, they had not given up hope of one day being taken over or at least protected by the Cape Colony.

Midway between the two opposing factions stood Jacobus Snyman. He had been the ally of Mocke and Kock in the stormy doings in Natal, but he had since drifted away from them without throwing in his lot completely with Oberholster. Rather was he playing for his own hand, keeping on the best of terms with Moshesh, chief of the Basuto, and spreading his people over the good corn-lands between the lower Caledon and the Orange rivers.

Land and jurisdiction were still the two vexed questions in Transorangia. The Snymans were accepting their farms from an agent of Moshesh who was delighted to have this recognition of his right to lands which his own people had not yet occupied. But other Boers, who had settled among the Basuto outposts ostensibly for rest and refreshment on their long trek to the Republic farther north, were buying and selling farms. Chief among these was Jacobus Duplooy, who had made the march to Maritzburg and back with Mocke and was now Snyman's unwelcome neighbour. Moshesh protested that these sales were of none effect. But there for the moment he left the matter. The mutual pressure of Boer and Basuto was not yet serious and so far no occasion had arisen for him to exercise his powers of arrest under his Napier treaty of 1843.

It was otherwise in Griqua Philippolis. The pressure there was serious and growing. The Oberholsters tried to keep in the good books of Adam Kok and his London Missionary Society advisers, for Adam was in treaty

with the Cape Government and they were on land which he claimed for his principality. But once already Adam had precipitated a momentary crisis by acting up to the terms of his treaty, and he might easily do so again. Early in 1844, a Boer had fought an Englishman who had died subsequently, of his injuries it was said. Adam had sent the Boer in to the magistrate at Colesberg to be tried under the Punishment Act. At once Mocke had demanded that the accused be handed over to the republican courts and, when Adam replied tartly enough, had threatened war. After a week or two of threats and counter-threats, the Colesberg magistrate had induced comparative peace by sending the Griqua captain a little ammunition and a private warning to be careful how he handled Mocke's people, and by restoring the accused to his friends.

A few months later, in June of that year, Mocke had set out with 80 followers and 100 native retainers to seek a way to Delagoa Bay or possibly Sofala. During the unwonted quiet that succeeded his departure a conference had been held at Adam Kok's capital: Oberholster on the one part, Jan Kock on the other, and Gideon Joubert, who had so often acted as emissary from the Colonial Government to the Trekkers, as mediator. Thus supported, Oberholster and Adam told Jan Kock flatly that they would suffer no one to dwell in Transorangia who repudiated allegiance to Her Majesty, and then, turning to Adam, Oberholster told him that he could not expect his folk, white folk, to submit to the jurisdiction of a half-caste Griqua, captain though he be. By thus burking the issue of jurisdiction the Philippolis conference had done nothing but add to the general sense of helpless irritation. In October Mocke came back.

Mocke had failed to make his way to the Indian Ocean, but he had talked with Potgieter or his friends. He began to force the pace in Transorangia to such purpose that Adam Kok begged the Governor for troops to drive hostile Boers out of his dominions, and Oberholster warned His Excellency that unless he and his could count on real support they must make terms with the Maatschappij.

Into this troubled land, in the middle of December, came first Jan Kock from Winburg and then Potgieter himself. Potgieter spoke reassuringly to Adam, urging, as Mocke had once urged Moroko, that since Boers and Griquas were alike emigrants from the Old Colony and since also land was plentiful, both peoples might well live side by side, interlocked as it were but each under their own governments. Poor Adam shuffled uneasily. He dreaded nothing more than to be the earthen pot by the side of the pot of iron. For all their guns and horses and Afrikander tactics, he knew his people's love of the more dubious delights of civilisation, and he foresaw a time when they should have consumed the brandy and Jan Mocke's men would hold the land. At last he plucked up courage to mutter that he must stand by his treaty, and Potgieter rode home.

As soon as Potgieter's back was turned Adam sent post-haste to the magistrate at Colesberg to beg for a British garrison. This time he got a very guarded reply that troops would be forthcoming if any general movement were made against him by the Boers. All that January of 1845 things drifted towards their appointed end. Jan Kock's men ruffled it up and down the banks of the Orange, the Griquas swaggered in reply with what courage they could muster, and the pro-Colony

Boers oiled their flint-locks and kept out of it all as best they might.

At last Adam Kok upset the apple-cart. A European *bywoner* on one of the farms that had been a rallying-point for Mocke's great commando of 1843, quarrelled with two natives who, he said, threatened him with their assegais. The owner of the farm, Jan Krynauw, brought the two natives before Jan Kock. Kock had them both flogged. As all this took place in the territory claimed by the Griquas, Adam Kok asked the Colesberg magistrate whether he would hold Krynauw if he sent him in. The magistrate, who knew that the Governor was contemplating a commission to unravel, if it might be, the tangled affairs of Transorangia, begged Adam for God's sake to be careful. Adam disregarded the advice and sent 100 men to arrest Krynauw on his own farm. Krynauw was not to be found, but, after engaging in wordy warfare with his good lady, the Griquas broke into the house and took away guns and ammunition.

Thus were the flood-gates opened in Transorangia. Everybody sprang to arms. Even the Oberholsters stood to, and the Snymans promised their patron, Moshesh, that they would help him if he were attacked. Snyman's rival, Duplooy, however, came out openly on the side of Mocke and Jan Kock. These three commandants fixed their headquarters at a great laager on the farm Touwfontein thirty miles north of Philippolis. There and in other smaller laagers close by they sheltered their families and such stock as they could. Then they rode out to war.

Both sides fired at sight, both loudly accused their opponents of having fired first, both swept off their enemies' cattle, and both avoided a general engagement. By the middle of April honours in this sputtering war

were easy. The Boers had killed one Griqua and captured six others, and had gained on the balance nearly 300 horses and 3600 head of cattle. On the other hand four or five of their number had been killed. At this stage there came a warning from the magistrate at Colesberg that fighting must cease. It did not cease. Hence, to give Adam Kok's treaty some meaning, the magistrate sent muskets and ammunition to Philippolis, and then occupied Alleman's Drift and Philippolis itself with 200 of the 91st Highlanders from the Colesberg garrison.

Adam had got his troops at last, but no one was eager to fight. Mocke and his colleagues, and Oberholster also, conferred with the magistrate. Oberholster, placed in a cruel position, protested again and again that he did not want to resist the Queen's majesty, but submit to Adam Kok he could not. Mocke spoke in more chastened tones than he had done to Menzies three years back, and offered to restore looted cattle if the Grikwas would do the same. But he insisted that he and his friends were an independent people subject only to the Potchefstroom Raad, and asked that a frontier be drawn round their territory.

Nothing could be arranged on that basis, for the magistrate could only accept unconditional surrender. Two days later, on 27 April, 100 of the 7th Dragoons, with field guns and a troop of Cape Mounted Rifles under the Captain Henry Warden who had once marched with Captain Smith from the Umgazi to Port Natal, clattered into Philippolis at the end of an eleven days' forced march of 250 miles from Fort Beaufort. Their colonel at once issued a proclamation warning the Boers of the penalties that awaited British subjects who resisted the Queen's troops, and made ready.

The Transorangians abandoned their most advanced post and fell back to their camp at Zwartkopjes, which covered the road to their headquarters further north at Touwfontein. There they waited in the biting cold of the High Veld winter. On the morning of 30 April they saw the Griquas coming and, sallying forth, engaged them. But when they saw the tall red-coated Dragoons and the C.M.R. coming up in support, they scampered back to a ridge and opened fire. Their gunners, an adventurous Frenchman and a deserter from the 91st, strove feverishly to get their three-pounder into action. The horsemen came on too fast for that. A couple of Boers and the Frenchman were killed, the deserter-gunner, less fortunate, was taken with his gun, fifteen Boers and yet another deserter were captured, and the rest were driven headlong into the plain. As they fled, uproar in the rear told them that the Highlanders had rushed their camp.

The Zwartkopjes skirmish, the first conflict between Boers and regulars north of the Orange, made an end of all resistance. Some of the Transorangians fled to their homes, some to the Touwfontein camp, where they surrendered presently with numbers of women and children happy to find release from their hardships on almost any terms. A remnant followed Mocke, Kock and Duplooy to the farther bank of Riet river.

It had come to fighting at last in Transorangia as in Natal, and here were the *rooibaadjies* encamped on the High Veld. Whether they had come to stay remained to be seen; but if they had, they would at least do away with all talk of submission to Griqua jurisdiction. Anything rather than that. Oberholster and nearly 300 of his men came in and took the oath of allegiance, scores

followed their example, and even Mocke and Kock and Duplooy made overtures. Backed by the prayers of the Winburg authorities, they asked that the magistrate be content with a mutual restoration of cattle. The magistrate could not be content. Rebels must hand over the Griqua beasts unconditionally.

So everyone waited uneasily while rumours went the rounds that Msilikazi and his Matabele were marching south on the warpath. The Matabele, cast thus for the rôle of panic-makers that Panda and his Zulus had filled so often on the narrower stage of Natal, did not come. Instead, on 16 June, Sir Peregrine Maitland rode into Touwfontein, the first Cape Governor to cross the Orange river. Here was no Napier firm and tactful, but an elderly and irascible Irishman badly shaken by a fall from his horse and not in the best of tempers. When, from a prudent distance, Mocke and his friends tried to excuse their past conduct, he told them roundly that they were a lot of rebels and must wait till he had decided their fate. They did not wait. Jan Kock and Duplooy fled to Winburg, taking with them the staunchest of their supporters, while Mocke withdrew himself still further from the Governor's displeasure to the Transvaal.

The remaining Transorangians stood by anxiously while Maitland conferred at Touwfontein with Griqua and Caledon chiefs and their rival missionaries. Presently the Governor jogged away homewards leaving Captain Henry Warden at Philippolis with a troop of coloured Cape Mounted Rifles and a six-pounder, and their old friend, Gideon Joubert, a field-commandant now, travelled round asking questions, listening to complaints as only a Boer official could listen, and calming fears and suspicions with a practised hand. Joubert

explained that His Excellency was not going to annex Transorangia, since he might not, but that he had tried to persuade each of the chiefs to set aside part of his territory as an alienable area in which Europeans might lawfully lease farms, and to induce them all to agree that a British Resident should exercise the powers of the Punishment Act over white men.¹

At length men learned that, whatever other chiefs might do, Adam Kok had set aside the northern half of his principality as an alienable area, and that Moshesh was similarly offering the wedge near the confluence of the Orange and Caledon rivers. It was disappointing that both these areas were already fairly full of Europeans, irritating that while half the quit-rents were to be paid to the Resident, the other half must be paid to the chiefs, exasperating that Moshesh was sending out his folk to stake claims in debatable and better lands farther up the Caledon. It was moreover disquieting that the Resident was to have the power to call on the chiefs for warriors to help him and his troopers to maintain the general peace. Still, the Touwfontein scheme at least recognised a man's right to hold a farm and sent a white official to stand between him and the hated jurisdiction of Moshesh or Adam Kok. Boundaries might be fixed one day and, as for the Resident's multi-coloured levy, surely that would not be used against white men. There was thus no sign of opposition when Captain Warden moved up at the New Year of 1846 and fixed his headquarters as British Resident on the farm Bloemfontein in the centre of the new Griqua alienable area.

Warden did not stand for British sovereignty, but he did stand for the growing authority of the Cape Govern-

¹ *Basutoland Records*, i, 88, 92, 119.

ment beyond the Orange. There were still men in Transorangia who would not have it so, and many more in Winburg, where Jan Kock was terrorising the elderly and faint-hearted landdrost and watching for a chance of bringing Transorangia yet within the bosom of the Maatschappij. Kock thought that chance had come in March 1846, when a Kaffir war, the War of the Axe, blazed up on the eastern frontier of the Colony and Winburg heard, the wish being father to the rumour, that the redcoats had been swept back all along the line. He summoned his men to ride south. Warden was too quick for him. Calling out the Caledon native levies to supplement his coloured troopers, he sent the Winburg commando flying, some to their homes, the rest headed by Jan Kock to the safety of Potchefstroom.

The Transvaal, universal asylum of dislodged Natalians, Winburgers and Transorangians, was spreading north-east and northward tumultuously. The landdrost, a good Potgieter man, who sat at Potchefstroom, and such semblance of government as survived Kock's overthrow at Winburg, owed nominal allegiance to Andries-Ohrigstad. But Ohrigstad itself was torn by factions.¹ It had been so from the first, parliamentarians against patriarchal monarchy men. There had been talk of a Volksraad before the exodus from Potchefstroom; but on arrival in the eastern Transvaal, that talk had been dropped while the monarchy men disputed among themselves the rival claims of Hans van Rensburg and Hendrik Potgieter. The Potgieters won, thanks to the reputation of their chief and the energy of Caspar Kruger,

¹ On Ohrigstad vide *Natulen* (A. Ohrigstad Volksraad, Pretoria Archives); *Bührmann MSS.*; *Voortrekkermense*, iii, 5 ff., 31 ff., 109; S. P. Engelbrecht, *op. cit.*, *Bijlage*; J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, *Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*; *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke*.

his right-hand man. 'Oom Hendrik' established himself on his farm, named appropriately Strydfontein, the Well of Strife, and gave the law to Ohriststad. Then, in the middle of 1845, Jacobus Burger, ex-secretary of the old Maritzburg Raad, came up with a few Natalians. Burger planted himself on a farm separated only by a stream from the Head Commandant's place, joined hands with the van Rensburgs, and challenged the military power.

Early in August the Volksraad party induced the Ohriststadters to adopt a constitution based on that of Natal. Such departures as they made from the lines of the parent constitution were intended to exalt the elected legislature above the War Lord in alliance with the Sovereign People, and to check hasty legislation. The authority of the Public was recognised to this extent that laws governing land tenure, the chief interest of a pastoral community, had to win the approval of the electorate before taking effect; but, on the other hand, Raad members were to sit, not for one year only but for two, half retiring annually, and a resolution to become law must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the House. Above all the Raad was to be supreme. The Potgieter men demanded that their champion should be Head Commandant for life over all commandants in Africa, with power to open letters from 'Portugal', to make treaties, and to summon the Volksraad and, source of so much trouble in Pretorius's Natal, the right to full membership of the legislature. The Volksraad men threw this petition out. There must indeed be a Head Commandant as sole executive officer, and Potgieter could hardly be ejected from the post he already held, but he must take his orders from the Raad and not presume to claim a seat thereon.

This struggle of the republican legislature to establish itself in Ohrigstad, a continuation of the old struggle in Natal, was embittered by disputes over native policy and fears of native attack. The general programme of the Ohrigstaders was that of the Trekkers everywhere: land, a sufficiency of labour on the spot, and, for the rest, racial segregation. But whereas these things had been easy to achieve in the wide, almost uninhabited plains of Winburg and Potchefstroom, they were difficult in Ohrigstad. Conditions there were more akin to those in Boer Natal. The first settlement was on more or less vacant land; but there were native tribes all around, boundaries were vague, both peoples were expansive, and the Raad was soon faced with the problem of keeping redundant natives out of European areas and of restraining its burghers from doing what they chose in native territories.

The latter problem was the more serious of the two. Hunters went north with native bearers through the lands of Sekwati the Bapedi to the Olifants river and even beyond it into the Zoutpansberg, while others went east down the passes of the Drakensberg into the low country of Manikusa the Shangaan. They shot off elephants and other game, and the tribesmen resented it. As 1846 wore on, the Raad was worried by rumours that Sekwati was beating up his neighbours and that chiefs farther north were conspiring against the Republic. It took precautions. Hunters beyond the Olifants must travel in parties for the sake of safety; burghers must laager under their respective field-cornets at the first rumour of attack; armed natives from beyond the Olifants found on republican soil were to be shot at sight; armed natives from other parts were to be disarmed and apprenticed or, if they ran for it, be shot,

and unarmed natives of any kind were to be handed over to the authorities.

In the event, nothing came of these alarms; but while they yet persisted, the Volksraad party challenged the validity of the cession of the land on which the Republic stood, a cession which Sekwati was said to have made to Potgieter in 1844. That cession, verbal and, as it were, personal to Potgieter, was one of Potgieter's chiefest claims to supremacy. If it could be discredited his power would be impaired and that of the Raad enhanced. Smellekamp had dropped a hint to that effect before sailing for Holland some time back, and now Burger acted upon it. The Volksraad men first tried to induce Sekwati to give them something in writing, but Sekwati refused. What he had ceded once, he said, he could not cede again. They therefore turned elsewhere and persuaded the regent of a minor son of Sapusa, King of the Swazis, to set his mark to a treaty which ceded to 'die Hollandsche Zuid Afrikaansche natie' land which was said to have been conquered by the Swazis.¹ It was a lordly cession, embracing the lands which Potgieter claimed and, in addition, the territories of Sekwati and other chiefs, and all at the cost of 100 head of cattle. That the lands were not in the gift of a regent of a minor son of a chief whose people had never occupied them did not trouble the Volksraad men. A scrap of paper covered a multitude of shortcomings.

Armed thus with rival treaties the Ohrigstad factions bickered more furiously than ever. Public meetings thundered against one another. The majority backed Potgieter and called their opponents Natal '*intekenaars*', signatories of the Cloete treaties, in short, hands-uppers; the minority, strong in the possession of a cannon and

¹ *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke*, p. 233; also L. Cachet, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

a majority in the Raad, accused Potgieter of all people of having been ready to acknowledge British supremacy in 1844 and, now, of being the friend of the English ivory hunter, Henry Hartley, a purloiner of tribute ivory, and, generally, such a troubler of Israel that he was frightening away native labour. At last Potgieter attempted a Cromwellian *coup d'État*. He accused Burger, the brains of the opposition, of many crimes, announced that the Volksraad was abolished, and had Burger arrested as he was riding with the State archives to attend a Raad meeting. The Volksraad men turned out armed, rescued their leader and the Raad minute-book, mounted their cannon and prepared to fight for it.

In face of imminent civil war, quiet men talked of trekking back to the comparative peace of Potchefstroom and would have done so but for the knowledge that they would lose their Ohrigstad farms if they did. At the last moment, however, Potgieter and Burger parleyed and, in March 1847, men flocked to Ohrigstad from all parts of the Transvaal. This mass meeting of the Public, in the old Trek style, effected a compromise. There was to be no fighting; men might choose whether they would obey the Volksraad or the Head Commandant, and Smellekamp was to be asked to arbitrate when next he should come to Delagoa Bay. Peace of a sort descended upon troubled Ohrigstad and the rival leaders began to write diligently to the distant Smellekamp.

The compromise was really a victory for the Volksraad party, for it was morally certain that Smellekamp would uphold them against the Dictator. Worst of in controversy, Potgieter determined to break away northward. Quite apart from the presence of his enemies,

Ohrigstad was not proving all that he had hoped it would be. It might have virtues in the eyes of husbandmen, but it had few attractions for cattle men and fewer for hunters now that the game was being shot off fast. Potgieter also knew now that the dorp itself was fever-stricken and the road to Delagoa Bay blocked by the fly. Besides, he had always hankered after the Zoutpansberg ever since he and Sarel Cilliers had gone to speak with Louis Trigardt there long years back. To the Zoutpansberg he would go. Things might be better there, and perhaps he could find a way thence to the Indian Ocean at Inhambane.

Potgieter got leave from the Portuguese authorities to seek a new road to the coast and then, without consulting the Raad, called up his men from all parts. Besides Ohrigstaders, men came from Potchefstroom and even from Winburg, and Potgieter crossed the Olifants at the head of 238 burghers and the usual fighting tail of native warriors. Beyond the river two chiefs proved hostile. One of them, Maraba, submitted without a fight and was suffered to keep the land occupied by his kraals and gardens; but the other, Maliete, fought, was beaten, and was deprived of his lands.

Potgieter then divided his force. One party he left at the base, the second he sent to find the way to Inhambane through Manikusa's country, the third, almost 100 strong, he himself led across the Limpopo against his old enemy, Msilikazi. Potgieter's party came upon the nearest Matabele outpost close to the Matoppo hills south of present-day Bulawayo, and at first met with some success; but when Matabele reinforcements came up, they were glad to escape with the loss of their captured cattle and sixty native followers.

South of the Limpopo they were safe and there they rejoined the main body. The Inhambane party had returned unsuccessful. No matter; the road would be found one day, and meanwhile they were possessed of a vast new territory, much of it fine high land. Potgieter gave his men claims to farms and led them back to Ohrigstad to prepare for the trek north. When all was ready, towards the close of the year, he marched with some of his cattle ranchers and elephant hunters as far as the Olifants. There he turned and hastened south to Potchefstroom. His men went on and spread themselves over 'Malieland'.¹ The Zoutpansberg, and not, as Retief had hoped, Natal, was to be Journey's End.

Potgieter had hurried south to Potchefstroom to cope with the expected arrival there of a mass trek of Natalians. The Natalians had been talking of this for some time past and now at last they had been screwed up to the trekking point.

When the British administration had been set up in Natal at the end of 1845 there had been perhaps 200 Englishmen in the country, for the most part at Durban, and some 400 Boer families, say 2000 souls, a very few in the coast-belt, a considerable group in and around Maritzburg, and the rest scattered widely over the Weenen district on either side of the upper Tugela. All of them, from Pretorius and Boshof and Stephanus Maritz downwards, were anxious to stay in Natal if they could. It was a good land, the climb over the Drakensberg was steep, the High Veld was bleak, and the welcome they would receive from their ultramontane brethren was likely to be still bleaker.

But if life in the Transvaal was, from all accounts,

¹ Where they presently built the village of Schoemansdal.

not happy, life in Natal was becoming impossible. It was hard to prove a claim to even 2000 acres under the Cloete settlement, harder still to prove a claim to a full farm of 6000 acres, and apparently hardest of all to get title-deeds for either. Meanwhile a Land Commission, going dead against republican ideas of mass segregation, had recommended that several reserves for natives be marked out in the central and coastal areas. Farms that marched with these reserves fell in value; farms included in the reserves had to be abandoned. It was all very well for Government to offer other farms in compensation, and to explain that if all the scattered farms were to be excluded, there could be no compact reserves. Farms far enough away from the reserves and from each other were not easy to come by on the healthy central terrace, and in any event it was an unheard-of thing that lands should be taken away from white men to be given to black men.

During the second half of 1847 the Natalians began to draw into laager or into the villages for safety from the swarming natives. Soon there were hardly a score of farms occupied in the whole of the Maritzburg district. Men began to talk seriously of getting away from it all. They could not live among so many natives; they could not keep their self-respect in a land where there was no colour bar; they could not live longer under a government, said some, which was to blame for all their troubles these twenty years past. And if they did trek, no one could say this time they were abandoning their church. The faithful Daniel Lindley had gone back to his mission work at the end of 1846; his successor, a worthy Hollander from the Cape Colony, had died on his way to Natal, and no one had come to fill the empty pulpits. But after all trekking was

a desperate venture. There was still one hope of gaining redress of grievances. Late in August, Pretorius set out overland to interview the Cape Governor, Sir Henry Pottinger, at Grahamstown.

Pretorius could speak for the Maritzburgers and some of the Weenen men, but it was not so certain that he could speak for the men of northern Weenen who lived in the great triangle formed by the upper Tugela, the Buffalo river and the mountains. These northerners cherished memories of past independence and hopes of future freedom, and looked to Andries Spies, sometime landdrost of Weenen, as their leader.¹

In October 1843 Panda had agreed with Henry Cloete that the Natal-Zululand border should be the Buffalo, and had asked that his people who lived to the west of the river in the Triangle should remain there. Two years later, when the British were actually setting up their government at Maritzburg, Spies came to terms with the Zulu king. Panda had already begun to send more of his folk across the Tugela and insisted that they must remain there, but he assured Spies that he had only promised the land to Cloete on terms that had never been fulfilled, that the land was therefore still his, and that Spies's folk might dwell there and could count on his help if the British tried to cross the Tugela.

Presently, as the number of his followers increased and the British made no effective effort to control Weenen, Spies grew bolder. In January 1847 he bought the territory from Panda for £75 payable six months hence, accepted a staff of office at his hands, proclaimed the Klip River Government with himself as Commandant, and told the Maritzburg authorities, as once upon

¹ On the Klip River Government, vide *Correspondence re Natal*, No. 980 xlii (1848), pp. 143 ff., 156 ff., 184 ff.

a time the Natal Raad had told Sir George Napier; that if they would recognise his folk as a free people, they would defend the Natal border; but if not, they would fight. This time, he added, they would do better than they had done in 1842 when they had been 'rather stupid'. Was that an unkind cut at Pretorius or an admission that Weenen had done wrong then to leave southern Natal to its fate in face of the British?

Panda, meanwhile, had cheerfully admitted to the Natal Government that he had indeed recognised the Buffalo boundary in 1843. But it was some months before that Government could convince the Klip River men that Panda had double-crossed them. It convinced them at last, sent Boshof up to Weenen as magistrate with a handful of soldiers to support him, offered pardon to all who would take the oath of allegiance within a limited time, and proposed to renew the rights to farms of those who would appear in person at Maritzburg to prove them.

The Klip River republicans would not listen. Few of them would take the oath, and hardly any of them would risk going to the capital lest they be clapped into gaol for their past defiance of authority. They prepared to trek and urged their southern neighbours to join them; they called on local chiefs to declare themselves either for or against the Maatschappij, and finally spread the report that Panda was going to invade Natal. All that December Natalians moved up to the laagers that were forming on the upper Tugela. There they waited to see what news Pretorius should bring them from the Colony.

Pretorius had passed through Weenen while Spies had been openly defiant of the Government. At Winburg he found republican institutions in ruins. The

heentraden's court had not met since Jan Kock's defeat at the hands of Warden more than a year ago, and though the pro-British or, rather, anti-Maatschappij party had recently elected a landdrost, that worthy had refused to serve without the Governor's approval, and so far His Excellency had sent no answer. It may have been Pretorius's passage that now encouraged the opposition to elect Willem Jacobs as landdrost and to denounce his rival and his supporters as enemies of the people.

Taking a Winburg delegate with him, Pretorius rode south slowly and reached Grahamstown in the middle of October. A man less convinced than he of the supreme importance of himself and his concerns, who had taken nearly eight weeks over a journey that could have been made in five, would have hesitated to importune a harassed Governor, within the hour, for an interview. A less rigid man or one who knew better than did Sir Henry Pottinger how much long slow talk meant to a Boer leader would have been at pains, even in the midst of a Kaffir war, to speak with a man who had travelled so far brooding over his grievances at every step. Pottinger put Pretorius off that day. Next morning an article appeared in the *Grahamstown Journal*, with whose ex-editor Pretorius was staying, summarising the *centum gravamina* of the Natalians and ending with a threat to trek unless these were remedied forthwith. Thereafter Pottinger, who already knew that he was soon to leave the country and feared to embarrass his successor, and who felt also that it was useless to hear Pretorius's side of the story without also hearing the Lieutenant-Governor's, referred Pretorius to his secretary and asked for the written statement which long Indian experience had taught him to prefer to conversations.

Having read the statement with which Pretorius had come prepared, the Governor published his reasons for refusing to reopen the Natal question, noted that there were some discrepancies between Pretorius's assertions and official reports, and left it at that.¹ Pretorius and his companion rode homewards furious.

Pretorius preached the Trek in the north-eastern districts of the Colony and drew many after him; he held meetings with some success in Transorangia and with more in Winburg, and rode into the laagers on the Tugela just before Christmas determined to lead every burgher who would follow him out of Natal and to strengthen the Maatschappij on the High Veld by all means in his power.

While Pretorius waited for laggards to come in and tried in vain to make an ally of the elusive Panda, a messenger arrived saying that a new Governor who called the Boers his children was coming up through Transorangia and Winburg to set all right in Natal. Pretorius must stand fast till he came. Pretorius stood fast, for this Governor was Sir Harry Smith, who, as Colonel Smith, had been right-hand man to D'Urban, the good Governor, in the Kaffir war of 1834. No harm in waiting to hear what he had to say. It might be good, and in any event waggons could hardly go up the Drakensberg passes so long as the rains were on.

While the Natalians waited Sir Harry Smith was busy on the High Veld. He came cantering up from the Orange river drifts at the head of sixty coloured Cape Mounted Rifles at greater speed and with a surer seat than Sir Peregrine, and with recent achievements in the Colony to his credit that seemed good in frontiersmen's eyes. He had arrived on the eastern frontier

¹ *Grahamstown Journal*, 16 and 23 October 1847.

to find that the War of the Axe was over and had at once effected a sweeping settlement. He had scrapped the remains of the hated Stockenström treaties and had reannexed D'Urban's Queen Adelaide Province under the style of British Kaffraria, and also the Stormberg area full of sheep and cattle men.¹

White and black and coloured Transorangians trooped into Bloemfontein to see the new Governor. The Oberholsters welcomed him, and Snyman, Moshesh's ally, promised him the support of 900 men for the easy form of British rule which he proposed to extend from the Orange to the Vaal. Moroko grinned when Sir Harry jollied him, and Adam Kok, overwhelmed by the promise of an increased pension and a torrent of prayers, cajolery and downright Peninsular profanity, gave up the last shreds of his jurisdiction *over the alienable portion of Philippolis*. At Winburg Smith talked cheerily and vaguely with Moshesh, bidding him leave the white men on his borders unmolested, and found numerous burghers in favour of his scheme of government. True, a large meeting at Sand River pronounced against it, but influential men came on from that meeting to tell him privately that they wanted the Queen's protection but dared not say so openly for fear of their neighbours.

Thus encouraged, Sir Harry and his troopers picked their way down the slippery passes of the Drakensberg and found the Natalians waiting for them, cold and miserable in the pitiless rain. Sir Harry offered them what he had offered the High Velders: land and security and the blessings of civilisation under a settled govern-

¹ On Sir Harry Smith's doings, vide *Correspondence re Natal*, No. 980, xlii (1848); *Papers in Kafir Tribes*, No. 969, xliii (1848); *Correspondence re Natal*, No. 1059, xxxvi (1849).

ment if only they would stay and form a border guard in northern Natal. All who were entitled to full farms should have their title-deeds without delay; all who were entitled to 2000 acres only should also have full farms provided they undertook to remain on them without encumbering them for seven years; all whose places had been included in the reserves should be recompensed; the natives were to be shepherded into the reserves; there were to be ministers and schoolmasters at the public cost. Some few of the Natalians accepted those terms and remained. There are still Moolmans and van Tonders and many Uyses in the land that Piet Uys had always claimed as his and in which he had died. But the rest refused.

Meanwhile Sir Harry, always an optimist, gathered that Pretorius approved of his land settlement and was even prepared to recommend the Transorangians and Winburgers to accept British sovereignty. He hoped that the very Transvaalers would be induced to return to their allegiance after all these years and miles, and asked Pretorius to go north and sound them. Pretorius went. Hardly was he gone than Sir Harry, on 3 February 1848, proclaimed the Queen's sovereignty over all lands and all men between the Vaal and Orange and the Drakensberg. That done, he set out for Cape Town by way of Maritzburg and Durban.

Pretorius afterwards said that Smith had promised him that he would not touch Winburg till he, Pretorius, had put the matter before the burghers, and that he would annex nothing unless four-fifths of the people approved. It is true that Smith had talked to all and sundry in his flamboyant style of four-fifths and even of 'all or none'; but he may well have thought, after his

recent experiences, that a sufficient number of High Velders and all the native chiefs favoured his policy. In any event it is hard to believe that he had named the Vaal as the southern limit of Pretorius's activities unless he meant the Vaal, and it is equally hard to believe that Pretorius, fresh from taking the fiery cross from Grahamstown to the Tugela, could have intended to do anything that might confirm the new Orange River Sovereignty. Be that as it may, the proclamation of the Sovereignty gave Pretorius his cue. Accompanied by Spies and other Weenen stalwarts, he tried to raise Winburg and Potchefstroom.

Pretorius's procedure at his public meetings was always the same: prayer, a recital of Trekker history, the reading of a few portions of the Sovereignty proclamation and his own version of the remainder, and a call to close ranks so that there might be one republic from the Orange to Ohrigstad and, perhaps in spite of everything, Natal. And yet the campaign missed fire. A fairly large assemblage at Winburg elected him Commandant-General and Jan Kock deputy, and threatened opponents and neutrals with the usual penalties; but there was a strong minority against any such course. At Potchefstroom the attendance was meagre. Potgieter had gone back to Ohrigstad to contend with the Volksraad party, but his recent visit to Potchefstroom had confirmed the allegiance of his followers there. Those that did trouble to attend Pretorius's meeting indicated clearly that if there was to be fighting, their leader was to be Potgieter and no interloper from Natal. Nor did Pretorius have better success with Moshesh than with Panda. He failed even to gain an interview with that diplomatic chief, and retired disappointed to his newly acquired farm behind the Magaliesberg hills and

waited, listening intently to the clamour that rose and fell south of the Vaal.

The clamour south of the Vaal died down for a time, but presently it rose again when proclamations arrived from the Castle setting forth the future system of government in the Sovereignty. Magistrates were only to be expected, but men in the south objected to paying quit-rents to Adam Kok now that his jurisdiction had been curtailed, and men everywhere disliked the idea of holding their farms on condition that they turned out at the call of the Resident to maintain the general peace. That might be only the old commando duty of Colonial days, but it might be much more. Pretorius had warned them against the 'militia ordinance', and men recalled the talk there had been in the Colony before the Trek of making soldiers of Afrikaners. Was that what Sir Harry had meant when he told the crowd at Winburg that they were his soldiers and he would have no others?

Nevertheless there were many who spoke up for the Queen and Sir Harry, and many more who said nothing either way, some of them disillusioned Trekkers, others folk who had left the Colony in search of pasturage and with no sense of grievance. Such men asked only for the land and peace that were to be had away from the immediate neighbourhood of Philippolis and the Basuto border if only the extremists would leave them alone. The new Sovereignty government promised them that relief. They were prepared to wait and see.

If Pretorius was to succeed in his design the indeterminate middle mass must not be allowed to wait and see. He emerged from the Magaliesberg and toured Winburg once more. Once more his campaign was only a qualified success, for, in the midst of it, a shower of

pamphlets descended on the Sovereignty conveying Sir Harry Smith's plain unvarnished opinion of men, presumably 'reasoning human beings possessed of immortal souls', who murmured against the scheme he had framed at their request and for their exclusive benefit. Let them beware how they listened to Pretorius, 'the factious demagogue', who had first rejected the proffered seat on the Natal Land Commission and then a commissionership in the Sovereignty and was now bending his energies 'to pervert facts—to startle the credulous—to alarm the timid'. The Sovereignty men must understand that Government meant them to be happy, and happy they were going to be; otherwise they would find him among them with horse, foot and artillery, their 'generous friend turned into the Avenger of Evil'.

That amazing proclamation and the impassioned prayer with which it concluded drew an enthusiastic memorial from the Snymans and an emphatic condemnation from nearly three times as many others; but again the mass, driven this way and that by the Governor who would compel them to be happy and Pretorius who would force them to be free, swithered miserably, resolute only to keep out of any fighting. Moshesh blandly snubbed the Liberator when he asked him if he were still the friend of the Maatschappij, and even Jan Kock counselled caution. He had been chased by dragoons in 1845 and by Warden's coloured array a year later. He was not minded to be chased now by a Governor who had at his disposal many of the veterans who had been engaged in the recent Kaffir war. There was nothing for it but to fall back behind the Vaal.

Pretorius, despairing of the Sovereignty men, called upon the Transvaalers to make them move. His appeal met with this much response that Potgieter came to

Potchefstroom and followed up his protest against the Governor's threatening proclamation with another on his own account.¹ But Potgieter's protest was an assertion of his right to speak for the Maatschappij rather than a confirmation of Pretorius's action. There could be no question of the two men working together. Not only were they obvious rivals for primacy in the Transvaal, but Potgieter saw in Pretorius the man who had surrendered Natal, and Pretorius saw in him the man who had abandoned him in face of the British. If Pretorius chose to go forward, he must do so alone. Potgieter would stay at Potchefstroom to safeguard the interests of his own folk there and in Winburg.

Pretorius prepared to go forward. His power was growing. He had won the support of many Potchefstroomers, die-hards were coming up from the Sovereignty and even a few venturers from Ohrigstad, and he could rely on his own Natalians. It was true that a few of them, Klip River men, were going eastward to live in independence beyond the Buffalo river on land granted them by Panda,² and others north to strengthen the Volksraad party at Ohrigstad—but the main body had either come or was coming to join him at Potchefstroom, once named, by a good omen, Vryburg.

At last Pretorius received the signal he had been waiting for. The new magistrates came up to the Sovereignty from the Colony. There was no opposition in the south, but in the north, at Winburg, Willem Jacobs, the sitting landdrost, asked Pretorius what he should do. There was only one thing to be done and Jacobs did it. He collected his men, drove the magistrate back to Bloemfontein, and prudently disbanded his force. A few days later Pretorius crossed the Vaal at the head of

¹ *Voortrekker-Argiefstukke*, pp. 313, 316.

² They founded the Republic of Utrecht.

a considerable commando, calling on all good men to rise against a Government that favoured natives 'and all other creatures' above free-born Afrikanders. As for Jan Kock's dread of the troops, this was 1848, the Year of Revolutions. The English would soon be fighting the French as usual and the redcoats would have to hurry home to defend their own country. The sun of liberty that was rising over Europe would shine also upon southern Africa. God willed it, and who could gainsay Him? And lest any were tempted to gainsay Him, Pretorius gave notice that active opponents of the Maatschappij would be dealt with according to martial law, and that neutrals must go beyond the Orange river without attempting to dispose of their lands.

Volunteers and pressed men swelled the ranks of Pretorius's commando. It was 500 strong when he entered Winburg, a good 1000 when he summoned Bloemfontein. Warden, who had at most a hundred armed men at his back, surrendered the capital at discretion, and was courteously set across the Orange at Botha's Drift, he and all who were with him, with their public and private property. Pretorius camped at the Drift with 1200 men.

Pretorius had hoped that the quiet expulsion of the Sovereignty officials and the unopposed advance of his commando to the frontier of the Colony would induce Sir Harry to leave the Sovereignty alone. That hope faded as he watched the troops tramping into Warden's camp on the other side of the river: four companies of Cape Mounted Rifles, two each of the 45th, the 91st and Sir Harry's own Rifle Brigade, and two field guns, which, with Warden's trusty six-pounder, made three against the solitary brass cannon the commando could boast of. Presently he heard that the Governor, posting

up from Cape Town to take command, had set a price upon his head and had called upon the Caledon chiefs to stand by, as in 1846, to uphold the peace of the Sovereignty.

Putting a bold face on it, Pretorius retorted that he too had thousands of blacks at his disposal. But he knew better. He knew that he was not even sure of the whites. All along the line as he had marched south, men had gone into hiding or fled to Colonial soil to escape his commandeering orders, while a large company of Vet River men and all the Snymans on Caledon river had gone into laager and defied him. It was apparently going to be the story of the Natal fighting over again: Zoutpansberg and Ohrigstad had not moved, Potchefstroom and Winburg had not put forth anything like their real strength, and Transorangia was, if anything, hostile. And in front of him was Sir Harry, the hero of D'Urban's Kaffir war and the recent Sikh campaign, at the head of 850 seasoned troops, making brazen advances to Potgieter at Potchefstroom and his own subordinate officers.

Pretorius managed to stop Sir Harry tampering with his officers, but he could not stop his men from deserting. Some of them had been forced to come, many others had come only because they had been told that the march was to be a demonstration of the weight of opinion against the Sovereignty. At the prospect of fighting, these men began to slip away by twos and threes, and then by dozens and scores. In desperation Pretorius tried to parley. He found Sir Harry willing enough, but as the Governor persisted in calling the burghers rebels, no one would venture into the British camp. On the night of 16 August Pretorius fell back along the Bloemfontein road.

Pretorius took up a strong position a few miles north of Touwfontein in front of the deserted farm Boomplaats on a ridge of hills that straddled the main road and sent out spurs parallel to it on either hand. A column following the road could be caught at short range in front and in flank.

Soon Pretorius heard that the troops had crossed the Orange at their leisure and had been joined by a few Sovereignty burghers and 250 mounted Griquas under Adam Kok and Andries Waterboer. Meanwhile, his own men were deserting steadily as rumours ran through the camp that the British were bringing up a force from Natal to catch the commando between two fires. At last, shortly before noon on 29 August, when at most 750 men remained to him, Pretorius saw the enemy column winding over the dead-flat plain, yellow in the winter drought. First, the green of the Cape Mounted Rifles and the Rifle Brigade, then the blue and gold of the engineers and gunners, behind them the scarlet of the 45th and the tartans of the Highland men, and last of all the long waggon train surrounded by a cloud of burghers and Griquas. If all went well they would soon be within the trap.

Pretorius's plan miscarried. The two forces made contact prematurely and the British had time to deploy. As they came on, led by the Cape Mounted Rifles in skirmishing order, the Boers broke into rapid fire, and presently Jan Kock led his men down from their right to rush the parked waggons and outflank the enemy. But Kock's party was driven off, just as the Boer centre and left gave way before the charging infantry. They splashed back through the stream that ran behind their main position and manned the nearest kopjes and the stone cattle kraal of the derelict farm. The British

guns drove them out, and when some of them tried to stand on the hills still farther back, the mounted C.M.R. and Griquas came at them. Their line of retreat was threatened. They broke and fled.

That was the end of the Boomplaats fight, some thirty men killed in all and fifty wounded. And that was the end of the Great Trek. Sir Harry Smith stormed north along the Trekkers' road which Trigardt and van Rensburg, Potgieter and Sarel Cilliers had marked out with their waggon-wheels, twelve, thirteen years back, to Bloemfontein, to Winburg, proclaiming the Queen's sovereignty at each halt with greater emphasis than ever, shooting a deserter of the 45th and a burgher as a warning, doubling the price on Pretorius's head, fining other ringleaders or confiscating their property, and hopefully offering Pretorius's rejected commissioner-ship to Potgieter, Pretorius's rival. That thrust drove before it into the Transvaal a scattering of Transorangians and Winburgers who believed they had committed themselves too far for forgiveness or who could not endure British rule at any price. It drew after it into the Sovereignty new men from the Cape Colony: sheep and cattle farmers, traders and shopkeepers, clergymen and journalists and landjobbers, ready to venture now into a territory whose peace and security were, they hoped, guaranteed by the Union Jack.

Thus was the Sovereignty, the future Orange Free State, marked out as something different from the Transvaal.

The Boer exodus from the Sovereignty after Boomplaats was the last flight of that long series of flights from the oncoming nineteenth century in British uniform that men call the Great Trek. The Trekkers had left the

Colony in search of the free land and labour and security that together made up the *lekker lewe* which had been slipping away from them in their old homes, and of the political independence which they believed would alone preserve that life. They had set up their rigid unadaptable society first on either side of the Vaal, but principally in Natal. 'Woe to the land that has shadows on its borders.' The Natal adventure had been a tragedy, the foredoomed failure of a forlorn hope. The Natalians had taken as much land as they desired, each man far from his nearest neighbour. They had proposed to keep on their farms such native labourers as they needed and to thrust unwanted tribesmen beyond the furthest bounds of European dispersion. And this they had essayed,

Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, heaven knows where,

but in a temporarily empty country flanked by crowded Zululand to the north and Kaffirland to the south, its coasts swept by the ocean tides. As well might the Children of Israel have planted themselves in open order on the floor of the Red Sea, and looked for the waters to remain a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left, and for the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots to tarry in their coming indefinitely. The thing simply could not be done in Natal. The black tide had begun to flow in and the isolated Boers to withdraw in face of it long before the redcoats, and with them the forces of the outer world, had entered through the Port.

But the thing could be done in the great open spaces above the Drakensberg where there was limitless land and few natives. Long before the Natalians in any

numbers had begun to move away to safer levels before the rising red tide and the black, the High Velders possessed land and labour and, in Winburg and the Transvaal at all events, the substance of independence, freedom to provide for their security in their own way. The Great Trek, a failure in Retief's Natal, was already a success in Potgieter's country.

The one threat to the Trekkers on the High Veld was the red tide, and, as the last of the Natalians scrambled up the Drakensberg passes, that tide swept right across the plains from the valley of the Orange to the valley of the Vaal. But there it was stayed. Behind that deep trench the Trek was safe. Presently the tide began to ebb. Pretorius, unquestioned leader now in Potchefstroom, and Potgieter, lord of the distant Zoutpansberg, both lived to see the independence of their Transvaal recognised and almost came to blows over the transaction. But both were dead before the February of 1854, when, six years after the first proclamation of the Orange River Sovereignty, the British Government half bestowed and half thrust independence on the Orange Free State.

The British retained the coast-belt. When Weenen men asked for the independence which had just been accorded to their brethren above the mountains, they refused. Weenen belonged to Natal, and Natal must be held as a whole or not at all. But the two republics dominated the interior from the Orange to the Limpopo: the Transvaal, the South African Republic, pure Trekker, the Free State mixed but Trekker in the main. In the republics, the tragedy of the Trek was deferred for a generation till new men, white, brown and black, came thrusting into the Boer sanctuary in search of gold and diamonds, and railways came to threaten their

independence, and the great open spaces began to shrink. Twice the stubborn Transvaalers fought against the forces that were coming against them, and once the Free Staters fought at their side. They saved their independence in the long run and saw more added unto it; they and their Colonial brethren preserved their identity as a people. But all else they fought for could not be saved by arms. The old free life began to pass away, as pass it must in all but the remotest parts of 'this very world, which is the world of all of us'.

Many of the grandsons of the Trekkers made good under the changed conditions. But many failed. Once more they began to trek, this time into the towns. There was, there is, nowhere else for them to trek to. And from the wilderness of the streets, where battle is now joined, the old Trekker cry for security goes up. Without segregation, social, territorial, industrial, White South Africa, men say, is doomed. It cannot live among so many natives.

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